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**DELINQUENCY AND SELF-CONTROL OUTCOMES FOR YOUTH  
IN MIDDLE CHILDHOOD: VARIATIONS BY NEIGHBORHOOD  
CONTEXT, RACE AND GENDER**

by

**TAKISHA V. LASHORE**

**DISSERTATION**

Submitted to the Graduate School

of Wayne State University,

Detroit, Michigan

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

2016

MAJOR: SOCIOLOGY

Approved By:

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Advisor

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Date

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## **DEDICATION**

This project is dedicated to my awesome, loving and supportive family. It is not often that I get to thank my parents, Alvin Jones (Leah) and Beverly LaShore, for their dedication, hard work, and for being true examples of what it means to survive and thrive in life. The best things parents can give to a child are wings. I now soar- I was allowed the freedom to dream big and it paid off. Thank you for not judging the “odd” child because of every random idea and thought she had. I love you both and I thank you for everything. It is often said that one “stands on the shoulders of giants,” however very rarely does that person get to acknowledge them personally. To my grandmother, Iola (Grandpa Nick) Whitaker, and great aunt, Frances Rowry- I thank you for challenging me at a young age to find my voice and actually use it. You two have taught me to be my biggest advocate and to make this world mine. I told you I would be a doctor someday. Your support has been greatly appreciated. Thank you! To my siblings, Tamekia, LaTonya, and Alvin, we’re all we got and I am nothing without you guys. Words cannot express the gratitude I have towards each of you for allowing me to draw from your strength and power during this process. I am proud of the adults you have become and look forward to our time free of me writing. To Evan and AJ, thank you for allowing me to miss birthdays, holidays, and gatherings to focus on this project. I am honored to be your big sister and proud of the young gentlemen you are becoming. To the kids, Racquel, AJ (Alvin), and KJ (Kyle), thank you for the absolute best hugs, kisses and random distractions a humble and grateful auntie could ever ask for. I pray that this process teaches you to dream big and reach beyond the stars for what you want in this life. Lastly, to my dearest friends, Sedika Franklin, Sarah Luke, Devhonna Turner, Maria Mendoza-Yi, Clarice Drumgoole, and Flora Riley, thank you for checking on me and allowing me to be the most delinquent friend ever. I love you all and THANK YOU!

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## **CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Statement of the Problem**

Throughout the world, youth are confronted with situations that compromise their sense of safety and well-being. They are witnesses to or are victims of violence in the home, school or community, and this exposure to violence leaves them emotionally scarred and at risk for negative outcomes, specifically delinquency and low self-control. Engaging in delinquent activities at a young age has a lasting impact on the life of a youth as delinquent behavior often persists throughout adulthood and disrupts the life course in negative ways.

Sociological research has a very long tradition of exploring explanations of crime, delinquency, and behavior in general. Research suggests that many children and adolescents are impacted by an array of adverse social and physical environmental conditions that put them at greater risk for delinquency and low self-control, such as exposure to violence, wide availability of guns, poverty, social injustice, substance abuse, and family and community instability. Most literature on delinquency and low self-control has focused on the effects of parental influences, and exposure to violence in the community or school on adolescent behavior. There has been limited exploration of the role of community involvement, race, and gender in moderating the relationship between neighborhood context and negative youth outcomes. Additionally, previous research does not specifically examine the impact of perceived neighborhood disorganization and perceived threats to personal safety on behavior during middle childhood.

Data collected over the past two decades show that rates of youth delinquency are high (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2013). In 2012, youth under the age of 15 accounted for less than 20 percent of the total population but accounted for nearly 30% of arrests of juveniles nationwide (US Department of Justice 2010). As a result, the health and well-being

of children and youth are in the forethought of many health organizations, as well as local, state, and federal government entities. For example, the State of Michigan Health and Human Services Division has allocated 15% of its 5.7 billion dollar operating budget towards juvenile justice services (Michigan Department of Health and Human Services 2015). This accounts for nearly \$765 million per year. Many programs have attempted to address negative youth outcomes by focusing on family well-being and school operations, or by surveilling youth victimization and bolstering child welfare. As a result, there has been an increase in healthy family programs and the Department of Health and Human Services now has employees working within schools to facilitate positive change. However, an area that is in need of further investigation is the effects of the neighborhood context on individual outcomes.

### 1.2 Purpose of Study:

A complex relationship exists between neighborhood context and negative youth outcomes. This study focuses on the impact of perceived neighborhood disorganization and perceived threat to personal safety on middle childhood experiences. The primary population of interest in this study is youth in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. In this study, neighborhood context factors that contribute to negative youth outcomes will be investigated. Neighborhood context factors are neighborhood level influences that contribute to youth outcomes. Neighborhood context will be defined through specific variables that measure perceived neighborhood disorganization and perceived threats to personal safety. Characteristics of perceived neighborhood disorganization, referred to in this dissertation as PND, include lack of opportunity, presence of criminal activity, structural blight, and social barriers. Perceived threats to personal safety will be defined via psychological considerations or feelings of distress that contribute to perceived threats to personal safety, referred to in this paper as PPS. Negative youth outcomes are delinquent

behavior and low self-control. This study specifically focuses on the notion that youth with high perceived neighborhood disorganization and feelings of threats to personal safety are more likely to have low self-control and exhibit delinquent activity.

In this research it is also important to explore community involvement, because community involvement can moderate the impact of neighborhood context on negative youth outcomes. Community involvement is a moderator because it impacts the magnitude or severity of the effect of neighborhood context on youth outcomes. Community involvement involves interactions with people in the neighborhood, and this can range from simply knowing people on the block in which you live to actively engaging in group activities that deal with issues of problems of the neighborhood (Tolan, Gorman-Smith & Henry 2001). Additionally, community involvement can involve volunteer work benefitting the neighborhood (Tolan, Gorman-Smith & Henry 2001).

Gender and race variations in the effects of neighborhood context factors will also be considered. This study utilizes two gender identity groups, male and female. Lastly, differences between African American and Caucasian youth are examined. Chapter Four includes more detailed discussions of the operationalizations of the dependent and independent variables.

This study is guided by the following research questions:

- 1) What is the effect of neighborhood context on youth self-control and delinquent activity?
- 2) How does community involvement moderate the relationship between neighborhood context and self-control and delinquency?
- 3) How does the effect of neighborhood context on youth self-control and delinquent activity vary by gender?

- 4) How does the effect of neighborhood context on youth self-control and delinquent activity vary by race?

This dissertation contains six chapters. Chapter Two includes an in-depth discussion of existing literature on relevant determinants of negative youth outcomes. Chapter Two specifically reviews literature about the key variables under investigation: delinquent activity, low self-control, perceived neighborhood disorganization, perceived threats to personal safety, community involvement, gender, and race.

Chapter Three outlines the theoretical frameworks for the study. There is discussion of Uri Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory and Intersectional Theory. How the microsystem, exocsystem, and macrosystems help explain the role of neighborhood context on youth outcomes, and how/why gender and race variations in the effect of neighborhood context factors might exist are the key subjects of this chapter.

Chapter Four presents the methodology of this study. This study utilizes secondary data from a larger Centers for Disease Control and Prevention-funded study on intimate partner violence, the SHARE study ("Strengthening Supports for Healthy Relationships: A Gender-Sensitive, Mixed Methods Analysis of Protective Factors for Intimate Partner Violence"). Chapter Four presents a detailed overview of the project, data collection, and measurement instruments for the independent and dependent variables under study.

Chapter Five includes statistical analysis and results of the data analysis. There is discussion of statistical tests used to describe the data and to test hypotheses of this study. Details regarding results and findings are outlined. Chapter six presents discussion of results, study limitations, implication for this study, future direction, and a conclusion.

### 1.3 Middle Childhood

#### *What is Middle Childhood?*

As already mentioned, the primary population of interest in this study is youth in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. This corresponds relatively closely to what those who study child and human development have identified as “middle childhood.” The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention identify middle childhood as the period between early childhood and adolescence. There is great debate on the actual age range of middle childhood, however. For example, the CDC identifies three categories of middle childhood: Middle Childhood ages 6-8 years; Middle Childhood ages 9-11 years; and Young Teens ages 12-14 years. For purposes of this study, Middle Childhood will refer to an age range of 9-14 years of age. These ages will closely correspond to the specific grade levels under study.

Middle childhood is also a unique time period for learning. Outside of infancy it is perhaps the greatest time of exponential learning. During this developmental period youth experience many physical, identity, cognitive, and social changes. Youth learn from both the family and the neighborhood environment, and the developmental changes mentioned above are steeped in these contexts. Transitioning from early childhood to middle childhood; and middle childhood to adolescence, is often challenging in and of itself. Thus, there is a complex interaction between this developmental stage and the youth’s environment, both social and structural.

Physical changes correspond to the body’s biological changes in preparation for puberty (Hutchison 2011). The quality of the environment greatly influences physical development and changes. This is primarily related to the availability of adequate resources- food, health care, and nurturing environment. Youth in middle childhood are also on a quest for identity development.

This is the concept of who they are becoming. This transition involves change in emotion, reasoning, personality, language, and relationships.

Cognitive changes relate to increased ability to communicate thoughts and the increase in complexity of thought. Additionally, cognitive development during middle childhood results in awareness and understanding of the self and the world surrounding the youth (Hutchison 2011). Youth learn primarily by mimicking adult behavioral patterns and responses to situations and daily life. Through these processes the youth also learn self-regulation or self-control. Understandings of the many critical dimensions of self - i.e., “attitudes, beliefs, prejudices, behaviors” -- are also acquired during this life stage, as well as an understanding of the consequences of one’s actions (Dahlberg & Potter 2001). “[C]hildren also learn from the kind of environment that adults or other caretakers unconsciously create in the family” (Dahlberg & Potter 2001). Environments that are dangerous and unpredictable promote, among other things, aggression and exploitative tendencies, whereas safe and predictable environments promote high self-control and aversion to risk (Del Giudice 2014; Ellis et al., 2009).

#### *Why study this population?*

The origins of persistent problematic youth outcomes are found during middle childhood. However, most research, prevention, and intervention strategies have focused on adolescence or later. It is extremely important to focus research at earlier developmental stages for youth, specifically, because things happen in middle childhood that shapes the life course. Youth are seeing, doing, and experiencing more negative contexts at younger ages, which creates developmental pathways of delinquency and violent behavior (Dahlberg & Potter 2001). Youth with an early onset of offending behavior tend to actively continue and escalate this delinquency as they age. For example, the Denver Youth Study found that 48% of those who initiated violent

behavior between ages 10 and 12 years of age became chronic violent offenders later in life (Thornberry et al. 1995).

#### 1.4 Importance of the Study:

This research can have an impact in several ways. First, this research can add to and update literature on this topic. In doing so, this research will extend knowledge on the unique dynamics related to middle childhood delinquent behavior and self-control, and this new knowledge can then be compared to existing knowledge on adolescents. Second, this body of work will be able to add to the discussion of effective prevention strategies once delinquency and self-control outcomes in middle childhood are better understood. Ideally, findings from this study can be used by professionals that work in community-based organizations with youth or in community organizing as it will provide information that enables them to be more effective in programming for age-specific youth groups and in neighborhood revitalization and neighborhood planning.



## CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Youth delinquent behavior and low self-control are serious issues because of the tremendous and immediate impact on youth health and well-being and the lifelong consequences for youth. As defined by the World Health Organization (WHO), health is not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, but is the state of complete physical, mental and social well-being (WHO, 1946). Living in surroundings fraught with disorganization or the threat of violence impedes a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and therefore has a negative impact on youth health (WHO, 1946). Contemporary youth delinquency researchers often argue that these behaviors are not geographically specific; they transcend socio-economic class, race, gender etc. (Harding 2003; Kennedy 2008). However, other researchers contend that, while delinquency is not geographically specific, exposure to violence within the environment context has adverse effects for youth (Berman 1996; Buka 2001; O’Keefe 1997; Sheidow 2001). In fact, a study by Farrel and Bruce (1997) found that exposure to violence in the community was related to subsequent changes in the frequency of violent behavior of youth.

### 2.1 Research on Negative Youth Outcomes

Negative youth outcomes, for purpose of this study, are operationalized as low self-control and delinquent behavior. I focus on youth self-control and delinquent behavior as outcomes because of the severe consequences youth face given the rising rates of undesirable behavior, specifically threats of violence or aggressive behavior.

#### *Delinquency*

The term delinquency has been used to describe a plethora of youth behaviors. According to the Oxford Dictionary of Sociology, delinquent behaviors are misdeeds or neglect of duty by juveniles (Scott and Marshall 2009). The term delinquency is typically used as a

synonym for crimes and deviant behaviors of a minor. Delinquent behaviors have ranged in intensity from use of drugs and alcohol, sexual activity, and running away from home to victimless crimes such as destruction of property and theft. The more extreme definition of delinquency has included acts of violence toward people or threats of violence this includes actions or threats of actions such as hitting punching, kicking people (US Department of Justice 2010). Dahlberg and Krug provided an adequate definition of interpersonal violence that provides a framework of viewing acts of violence as mentioned above. Dahlberg and Krug (2002) state that interpersonal violence is defined as “the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against another person or against a group or community that results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation.” For the purposes of this study I define delinquency as actions and activities such as damaging property, theft, attacking someone, gang activity, and use of alcohol or drugs (Anderson and Dill 2000; Elliot, Huizinga & Ageton 1985).

Research on delinquency has primarily sought less to define the term but more to look at predictive or protective factors of such behaviors. O’Keefe (1997) examined the relationship between high levels of violence exposure in the community and school and the increase in youth behavior problems. The author stated that over 45% of the youth in this study “reported witnessing severe forms of violence such as shooting or stabbing in their communities or schools during the year prior to the study” (O’Keefe 1997). This lends support to the argument that exposure in the community context has an adverse impact on youth behaviors.

### *Self-Control*

Self-control is a concept used by sociologists to explain differences among people in the frequency of engaging in a wide variety of acts that cause harm to others (Gottfredson & Hirschi

1990). These actions include acting without thoughts of consequences or for seeking pleasure and performing actions knowing they are risky as they seek excitement from risk behavior. Low self-control, referred to as LSC, is defined by actions such as acting on the spur of the moment, lack of regard for consequences to actions and behaviors, losing one's temper easily, and acting before thinking (Grasmick, Tittle & Bursik 1993). Literature on self-control suggests that self-control is related to individual perceptions of violence and their potential for delinquency (Allwood & Bell 2008; Funk et. all 2003). Additionally, there is an indifference to the feelings of others; and the youth is quick to anger (Grasmick, Tittle & Bursik 1993).

Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) developed a theory of crime that focuses primarily on criminality as a result of the absence of self-control. In *A General Theory of Crime*, Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) propose that a key predictor or cause of crime is low self-control coupled with the opportunity for criminal behavior. Given the developmental tasks of the age group under study, it is possible the youth have not achieved a level of self-control. Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) argue that people with high self-control give consideration to the consequences of their behavior and those with low self-control do not consider long term consequences. Additionally, they view self-control as learned during the early stages of life and, once learned, relatively resistant to change.

Self-control is related to perceptions about delinquent behavior and violence (Allwood & Bell 2008; Funk et. all 2003). A key factor in this is that youth who have these types of exposure in their neighborhoods are desensitized to problem behaviors as the opportunity for criminal behavior is readily available. According to Funk et al. (1999), perpetual exposure to violence through environmental factors and visual media weakens the link between violence and feelings of anxiety that in turn leads to more youth engagement in violent behavior. Funk et al.'s

study suggests that repeated exposure to negative factors alters cognitive and affective processes leading to desensitization and negative behaviors among youth.

## 2.2 Research on the Effects of Neighborhood Context on Youth Outcomes

This research supports the ongoing discussion on youth who are exposed to violence and other negative factors in their communities and their subsequent likelihood to have low self-control and to engage in delinquent acts themselves. It was suggested in research by Black et.al (2009:313) that “although violence of all forms occurs across cultures, adolescents may form different perspectives about the violence based on the context of the incident and their cultural backgrounds.” Especially for youth, exposures in the community may impact self-control and the tendency for delinquent behavior.

Existing research provides ample evidence of the relationship between exposure to violence and neighborhood dysfunction and negative youth outcomes. Prior research on youth outcomes has focused on predictors such as family exposure, youth victimization, community exposure, or exposure in the schools to violence. Some researchers have associated exposure to family violence and youth risk behaviors (Eriksen 2006; Sheidow, Gorman, Tolan & Henry 2001). Research has suggested that youth who are exposed to financial instability, substance abuse/ use, unstable family situations (e.g., violence in the home, trans-generational or single parent households), and violence within the home are at risk of problem behaviors. In addition, Stith et al. (2000) investigated the relationship between growing up in a violent home and later becoming either a perpetrator or, in the case of female youth, victims of violence in martial relationships. Stith et al.’s findings suggest that growing up in an abusive family is positively related to becoming involved in a violent marital relationship either as a victim or perpetrator. This line of research suggests that violence is cyclical in nature, and postulates that family

predictors, such as family structure, support, culture, and level of functioning, have significant influences on youth behavior.

Other studies have explored the relationship between victimization and risk behavior (Hagen 2001; Heyman & Sleep 2002; Swinford 2000). Richard Heyman and Amy Sleep (2002) explored the role of child abuse as a singular predictor for violent behavior later in life. Study findings suggest that multiple exposures to parent-child (child abuse victim) and inter-parental (domestic violence) violence in childhood increases risk for family violence in adulthood. Heyman and Sleep therefore propose that long-term violence exposure contributes to negative outcomes or risk behaviors for youth.

Previous research has largely ignored the specific role that neighborhood context, perceived neighborhood disorganization and perceived personal safety play in affecting negative youth outcomes, self-control and delinquency. The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between neighborhood context and youth outcomes for middle school students.

The effects of neighborhood context on the lives of youth have been explored in many studies (Berman 1996; Buka 2001; Saunders 2003; Thompson & Massat 2005; Wikstrom & Loeber 2000). There are many definitions of what neighborhood context should be and each definition has a different emphasis. Most research on neighborhood context and risk behaviors has focused on neighborhood boundaries. The boundaries have been census tract identified areas of government classifications of urban, rural, suburban areas.

Research by Griffin et al. (1999) also examined perceived social environment, which included exposure to violence and personal control as predictors of aggression in urban minority youth. Within a sample of 452 African American sixth graders, these researchers found that perceived environmental factors, including neighborhood risks, were significantly related to an

increase in youth aggressive behavior. These factors are key indicators of perceived neighborhood disorganization and are directly related to youth perceptions of threats to personal safety. Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn (2000) examined literature on the effects of neighborhood residence on child and adolescent well-being. Of particular interest for this study is Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn's discussion of the documented links between neighborhood characteristics, primarily socioeconomic status and residential instability, as they note consistency across previous research with respect to these variables. For example, several studies indicate a correlation between low socioeconomic status and higher rates of aggression (Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn 2000). Additionally, both high residential instability and low SES were positively associated with delinquent and criminal behavior (Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn 2000).

David Harding (2003) explored the relationship between neighborhood factors and problem outcomes for adolescents. Harding specifically examined the causal effects of neighborhood on two youth outcomes or risk behaviors: school dropout and pregnancy. He found that when evaluating 2 groups of children who have identical observable factors, those in higher poverty neighborhoods are more likely to exhibit problem outcomes. The author suggests that this is due to the impact of neighborhood context as these youth have "fewer resources in the home to protect them from neighborhood risk factors," (Harding 2003:710). This suggests that neighborhood characteristics influence youth outcomes.

#### *Perceived Neighborhood Disorganization*

Neighborhood context may not be the only factor that contributes to youth negative outcomes; however, it is an important factor. According to William Julius Wilson (1987, 1996), not only are neighborhoods important when looking at societal impacts on the individual but also they are fundamental cause of social problems. Wilson argues that neighborhood disorganization

provokes disorder due to limited opportunity (Wilson 1987, 1996). This line of thinking proposes that concentrated poverty contributes to social pathologies due to a pervasive culture of poverty in which one is unable to find secure employment, where families are unstable, and there is a sense of hopelessness among the people.

Important to note is that neighborhood disorganization is perceived. According to Ross and Mirowsky, (2001:265) “disorder is perceived and reported by residents of the neighborhood.” Because it is a perception, no two youth in the same neighborhood may perceive it the same way. Nonetheless, perceived neighborhood disorganization has been strongly associated with youth risk behaviors, such as delinquency and low self-control (Farrell & Bruce 1997; Cooley-Quille & Boyd 2001; Harding 2003; Gorman-Smith, Henry, & Tolan, P.H. 2004; Kling 2007). Thornberry et al. (2003) discuss characteristics that contribute to perceived neighborhood disorganization, by examining youth perception of 1) the lack of opportunity such as high unemployment; 2) presence of criminal activity such as gang activity; 3) structural blight such as abandoned buildings; and 4) social barriers such as racial or cultural group conflict which leads to instability and social alienation, which, further results in youth risky behavior. While Thornberry et al. (2003) focused on gang membership and activity; their findings support the concept of neighborhood disorganization and its effect on shaping youth behavior. Thornberry et al.’s research specifically supports the idea that youth exhibit low self-control and delinquent behavior as a response to the inability of the community to provide needed supports, opportunities, safety, and positive sense of cohesion to achieve socially valued goals. Harding (2003) confirms that there is plenty of room for “neighborhood effects to operate on those who are otherwise most disadvantaged” (Harding 2003:710).

### *Personal Safety*

In addition to the fact that youth behavioral outcomes are associated with negative neighborhood contexts, there are psychological considerations or feelings of distress that contribute to perceived threats to personal safety for youth within the environmental context. These feelings of distress may include intrusive thoughts, such as feelings of overall safety in the neighborhood; worrying about personal safety while traveling to and from school; worries about safety while in school; and personal experiences such as having been personally affected by violence, and gang activity in the neighborhood (LH Research Inc., 1993).

Research on neighborhood effects on adolescent behavior has focused on neighborhood situations and structural features that contribute or detract from personal safety (Farrell and Bruce 1997; Reese 2001). For example, Osofsky, Wewers, Hann and Fick (1993) found a relationship between chronic exposure to violence in the community and stress reactions, such as worries about safety, recurrence of upsetting thoughts, and feelings of loneliness. Additionally, Cooley-Quille and Boyd (2001:199) found “youth with high levels of community violence exposure reported more fears, anxiety, internalizing behaviors, and negative life experiences than those with low exposure.” Exposure to neighborhood disorganization (here, via a result of community violence) serves as a perceived threat to personal safety. Community violence is the primary negative context that researchers describe when assessing the day-to-day environment of youth. Thus, existing research suggests that exposure to violence is a defining feature of neighborhood disorganization and that it has an effect on both youth tendencies toward delinquency and perceived safety among youth.

### 2.3 Research on Community Involvement

In order to improve understanding of the youth who engage in delinquent activity and exhibit low self-control, the current study also explores the role of community involvement,



gender, and race as moderators of the effects of neighborhood context on these youth outcomes. For purposes of this study community involvement involves interactions with people in the neighborhood or knowing people on the block on which you live; involvement in group of neighbors that deal with issues or problems within the neighborhood; and volunteer work benefitting the neighborhood (Tolan, Gorman-Smith & Henry 2001). The specific interest in this study is on how community involvement serves to change perceptions of neighborhood disorganization and personal safety, thereby altering the association of neighborhood context on delinquent behavior and low self-control.

Most studies explore how community involvement serves as a protective factor in reducing youth delinquency and other behavior outcomes such as smoking or school dropout (Mahoney 2000; Metzger et al., 2011). This body of literature typically discusses community involvement in terms of youth activity, such as participation in sports, church activities, school clubs, or other extracurricular activities, or positive adult-youth relationships that reduces the youth's opportunity to engage in delinquent activity. In a study of 564 elementary, middle, and high school students, however, Brevard et al. (2013) sought to explore how community involvement, specifically intergenerational connections within the neighborhood, impacted perceptions of neighborhood disorganization. Their findings were that higher levels of intergenerational connectedness lowered perceptions of disorganization within urban neighborhoods.

Hugh Crean (2012) examined the relationship between youth extracurricular activity participation and neighborhood adult support, and youth decision making skills and delinquent behavior. Crean collected survey data from 2611 youth from urban middle schools in New York, 819 were sixth graders. Of the total population 70% identified as African American and

49% were males. The results from this study found that intensity of activity participation had a direct positive association with delinquent behavior. However, the author determined that the association was mostly due to participation in neighborhood clubs and not just extracurricular activities. This research had the unattended outcome of describing the role of community involvement, on the neighborhood level rather than individual activity participation, on youth behavior outcomes. The results from this study revealed that intensity of activity participation in neighborhood clubs, as opposed to league sports, school, church events, etc., was associated with delinquent behavior. This reveals the strength of individuals and the context of the neighborhood. In activities that are not neighborhood-based youth are exposed to practice and beliefs of individuals from other communities.

#### 2.4 Research on the Significance of Gender

Males between the ages of 10-214 years accounted for nearly 52% of homicide victims in 2010 (Michigan Council on Crime and Delinquency (MCCD) 2014). As such, some researchers believe that males participate in more delinquent activity and exhibit low self-control more than females (Joseph, 1995; Puzzanchera 2009; Zahn, Hawkins, Chiancone, & Whitworth 2008). For instance, Gottfredson et al. (1991) found that neighborhood disadvantage (poverty, unemployment, and female-headed households) increased violence among girls, but not boys, while neighborhood affluence increased theft for males but had no effects on female offending (Gottfredson et. al. 1991, as cited in Fagen & Wright 2012). Janice Joseph (1995) collected data via survey from youth in three public schools, juvenile courts, and a juvenile institution in Atlantic City and Pleasantville, New Jersey. Examining a non-random sample of 333 African American youth, Joseph found that of 57% of the youth who were classified as delinquent, 64% of them were males and only 36% were females. In addition, of the 30% of youth who were

convicted for an offense, 78% were males (Joseph, 1995). Males also reported more participation in delinquent activity than females.

Angie Kennedy (2008) also explored potential connections between gender and delinquent activity by assessing teen dating violence among urban, African American high school students. Kennedy discovered that dating violence was linked to witnessing community violence among female students but not male students. Her findings suggested that violence for males was so commonplace that it “bears little relationship to the risk of dating violence,” victimization or perpetration, (Kennedy 2008:38). This suggests that there are gender differences in internalization of exposures, and that there are gender differences in terms of how violence is made a part of youth’s norms and values. This would indicate there are gender differences in perceived self-control, which is a result of internalization of exposures. Additionally, Kennedy’s study suggests that community exposure to violence also impacts perceived self-control, as the definitions of normal behavior are associated with what is modeled as acceptable behavior.

Another example of the role of gender is found in a study that utilized 1,120 low-income urban adolescents, Katz et al. (2012) explored mediators of the relationship between neighborhood risk characteristics and internalizing and externalizing symptoms. The authors discussed how stressful life events and exposure to violence impact the relationship between neighborhood risk and aggression, delinquency and somatic symptoms. However, the results from the study suggested that both gender and age moderated the “pathways between stressors and somatic complaints and between exposure to violence and somatic complaints” (Katz, Esparza et al. 2012: 650).

In contrast to the above research, however, other studies have found no significant differences between males and females as it relates to neighborhood context and youth outcomes (Mrug and Windle 2009). Yet there is also a small body of literature that explores gender differences in the effects of neighborhood context and finds that females exhibit more delinquent activity and/or low self-control than males (Zimmerman & Messner 2010; Karriker-Jaffe et al., 2009). The current study hypothesizes that male youth are more likely to have low self-control and exhibit higher delinquent activity than females because of their neighborhood context. However, the neighborhood context influence on youth outcomes will still exist for girls.

### 2.5 Research on the Significance of Race

While rates of youth delinquency have fluctuated over the years, the number of youth of color that are both victims and perpetrators of crime is occurring at alarmingly high rates. According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), 51.5% of homicide victims in 2010 were African American males between the ages of 10-24. This underscores the importance of the role that race plays in how we examine delinquent behavior and self-control. In the State of Michigan, 53% of all youth at age 17 entering the Michigan Department of Corrections, MDOC, were youth of color. Yet, youth of color comprise only 23% of the youth population statewide (Michigan Council on Crime and Delinquency (MCCD) 2014). Additionally 59% of youth under the age of 16 were African American, even though they account for only 18% of the population statewide (MCCD 2014). The disproportionate convictions of youth of color coupled with the overwhelming percentage of youth of color that are victims highlights the importance of studying the effect of neighborhood context on youth self-control and delinquent behavior.

There is research that explores variations in negative youth outcomes according to race. Fagan, Wright, and Pinchevsky (2013) utilized data from 1,856 African American, Hispanic, and

Caucasian adolescents that participated in the Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods (PHDCN) to explore the effect of neighborhood and background characteristics, specifically economic disadvantage, on youth delinquency. In this study youth delinquency was operationalized primarily as substance use. The results from this study indicated that neighborhood disadvantage did not significantly increase the likelihood of substance use for the full sample. However, “when relationships were analyzed by race/ethnicity, one significant effect was found; disadvantage increased alcohol use among African Americans only” (Fagan, Wright, and Pinchevsky 2013:78).

Alternatively, there is research that attributes outcomes to other factors than race. Mario Smalls (2007) explores how and which neighborhood conditions help account for racial differences in social networks. The five neighborhood conditions were: neighborhood poverty, proportion black, residential stability, ethnic heterogeneity, and population density. He utilized a data set from the “Urban Poverty and Family Life Survey, a survey of blacks, whites, Mexicans, and Puerto Ricans clustered in Chicago Census tracts, matched to 1990 Census data” (Small 2007: 320). Findings suggested that segregation of races breeds conditions where some races are more likely to live in highly impoverished areas. Results from the study indicated that racial differences in social network size are not robust to controls for neighborhood conditions. As a result, poverty, not racial composition, was significant.

Many scholars have explored the effects of neighborhood context on the lives of youth. Research on the effects of neighborhood context on youth outcomes is focused primarily on adolescents and does not discuss the specific and unique impact of perceived neighborhood disorganization and perceived threats to personal safety. This research will add to the literature by examining the relationship between perceived neighborhood disorganization and perceived

threats to personal safety and delinquent activity and low self-control. I hypothesize that community involvement will moderate this relationship. I also hypothesize that male youth and African American youth will exhibit higher delinquent activity and are more likely to have low self-control.

### CHAPTER 3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Theories are used to explain and predict human behavior or social problems. Theories examine the biological, psychological, social, economic and cultural dimensions of human behavior (Robbins 2012). Additionally, they provide a broader understanding of complex forces that shape people's lives, including persistent social conditions and problems such as perceived neighborhood disorganization, oppression, poverty, and violence.

This study incorporates two theories to frame the data analysis: ecological theory and intersectional theory. I utilize the ecological theory of human development of Uri Bronfenbrenner to help understand the complex nature of neighborhood context on negative youth outcomes. I utilize the intersectional theory, also referred to as intersectionality, to explore how race and gender serve as simultaneous and interlocking systems of oppression that contribute to negative youth outcomes. Although both theories assist in exploring predictors of youth outcomes, they are discussed independently of one another in this chapter. The theories will be discussed further in Chapter Six as they are applied to the findings.

#### *Ecological Theory*

One defining property of the ecological theory is that "human development takes place through processes of progressively more complex reciprocal interaction between an active, evolving biopsychological human organism and the persons, objects and symbols in its immediate environment," (Bronfenbrenner 1994). There are five socially organized subsystems that "help support and guide human growth," (Bronfenbrenner 1994). The five subsystems are the 1) microsystem; 2) mesosystem; 3) exosystem; 4) macrosystem; and 5) chronosystem. For the purposes of this study, understanding the impact of the microsystem, the exosystem, and the macrosystem upon youth is critical in determining how their perceptions of the world around

them, specifically their perceptions of neighborhood disorganization and perceptions of personal safety, contribute to low self-control and delinquent activity.

### 3.1 Ecological Theory: Microsystem

According to Bronfenbrenner (1994):

A microsystem is a pattern of activities, social roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given face-to-face setting with particular physical, social, and symbolic features that invite, permit, or inhibit engagement in sustained, progressively more complex interaction with, and activity in, the immediate environment.

Neighborhoods and people within the neighborhood are a part of the microsystem as social relations are embedded within such a context. While there may be more than one aspect of the microsystem that directly impact youth the primary focus here is on interactions with the neighborhood and individuals within it. The direct social interactions with social agents, the people in their environment, and their environment determine how youth behave and interact with these systems.

Social agents are people, culture, and ideologies that influence youth development and behavior. These are the things that help to shape what the neighborhood or environment looks like. The microsystems level of the ecological theory describes the characteristics associated with the neighborhood or setting that contribute to disorganization and an unsafe environment. Examples of these characteristics can include presence of gangs, blight, minimal employment opportunities, and disengagement of members from one another (Bronfenbrenner 1994). As the youth interacts with their surroundings the environment or neighborhood would become influential on youth development and behavior. Ultimately, the neighborhood context influences the socialization of the youth. How groups and individuals interact with the youth directly impacts the youth and how they react to this system. This in turn influences how the youth is



treated during interactions. For example, if an environment is not nurturing or creates distressing interactions, such as a youth not being able to walk down the street without crossing paths with drug dealers or drug users, the youth are likely to develop negative relationships with these individuals, by avoidance or negative responses, and the environment, by normalizing observed behavior or perceiving threats to safety. As a result, the neighborhood itself and those within it are also representations or models for behavior. These include their roles, morality, and conflict resolution skills.

### 3.2 Ecological Theory: Exosystem

According to Bronfenbrenner (1994):

The exosystem comprises the linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings, at least one of which does not contain the developing person, but in which events occur that indirectly influence processes within the immediate setting in which the developing person lives.

The neighborhood itself has an indirect influence on youth outcomes. In this study, I argue that two risk behaviors, low self-control and delinquency, are considered outcomes of perceived neighborhood disorganization and threats to perceived personal safety within the neighborhood. This aspect of the theory focuses on the processes of development that occur in the setting/environment of the youth, the neighborhood context itself. Ultimately, how a youth is socialized to their environment determines how they perceive their environment. For example, in a neighborhood where high unemployment and lack of resources causes the family to experience financial instability, and illegal means of income becomes a means of recourse, may in turn increasing the likelihood that youth will exhibit behavioral issues such as stealing or using force to get money.

There are many factors that contribute to negative youth outcomes. However, the focus here is on what youth observe or witness in the neighborhood and neighborhood characteristics and how this impacts development and behavior. The physical environment, economic and recreational opportunities, existing social supports and other factors impact a member's level of functioning (Wade & Tavis, 2000). This means that youth who live in impoverished environments, lack recreation opportunities or other positive connections to the neighborhood environment, and witness violence and other crimes in the neighborhood are at risk for negative outcomes later. These factors may contribute to perceptions of disorganization and feelings of threats to personal safety within the neighborhood. For example, abandoned houses and buildings create opportunity for illegal gang activity which, when witnessed, lessens feelings of safety as youth may develop feelings that they may become victims of crimes themselves. As a result, the youth develops behaviors that protect them in the short versus the long term; this is one of many aspects of low self-control. This type of exposures serves to desensitize youth to disorganization within the neighborhood which in turn can lead to participation in similar delinquent activities.

### 3.3 Ecological Theory: Macrosystem

According to Bronfenbrenner (1994):

The macrosystem consists of the overarching pattern of micro-, meso-, and exosystems characteristics of a given culture and subculture, with particular reference to the belief systems, bodies of knowledge, material resources, customs, life-styles, opportunity structures, hazards, and life course options that are embedded in each of these broader systems.

The macrosystem is considered the highest level of Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory model. It includes how factors such as the larger culture, values, and beliefs of an individual indirectly impact their development. This aspect of the theory moves beyond individual attitudes

and interactions, or neighborhood exposures, and focuses on ideological patterns or features of the social context on youth development. For example, the ways in which social locations- race, ethnicity, or gender, operate in a particular culture. In the present study, it is hypothesized that male youth and African American youth are more likely to have low self-control and exhibit higher delinquent activity because of their neighborhood context. As such, these attributes, race and gender, must be taken into account (both separately and simultaneously) when seeking to understand development and behavior of youth.

Bronfenbrenner states that, “the macrosystem may be thought of as a societal blueprint for a particular culture or subculture. This formulation points to the necessity of going beyond the simple labels of class and culture to identify more specific social and psychological feature at the macrosystem level that ultimately affect the particular conditions and processes occurring in the microsystem” (Bronfenbrenner 1994). The macrosystem factors related to gender are the broad set of cultural values and beliefs rooted in how males and females are socialized. Gender is a social construct; however significance is given to the roles assigned to males and females. Gender roles are typically socialized in the family and reinforced by other social institutions, schools or neighborhoods. Within these institutions strong beliefs about differences are seen through the stereotypical traits attributed to masculinity and femininity. For example, males are encouraged to be dominant, independent, confident, and aggressive. As a result, male youth may engage in behaviors indicative of low self-control. They may have a greater need for activity, lack of sympathy towards others, or lose their temper easily. Females, on the other hand, are encouraged to be passive, devoted to others, and emotional. As a result, female youth may engage in behaviors such as not reporting theft, or displaying disorderly conduct.

The macrosystem factors that are related to race are situated within the cultural values and beliefs held about various races. Race is a social concept. Meaning, race is a socially constructed identity, where the content and importance of racial categories is determined by social, economic, and political forces. Race in many ways determines an individual's social mobility, and other life opportunities. For example, banks or financial institutions are an example of the social institutions that utilize laws and practices that express dominant ideologies of institutional racism. A company can deny a loan based upon arbitrary beliefs of risk such as the race of the applicant or the selected location of the home. This practice systematically prohibits or minimizes wealth obtainment by denying property ownership or forcing people to live in poorer neighborhoods. As a result, youth who find themselves in neighborhoods with run down or poorly kept buildings are at a greater risk for unfavorable outcomes. Thus, societal factors create and sustain a culture conducive to negative outcomes.

The ecological theory allows us to study phenomenon of negative youth outcomes in context of multiple environmental influences. Youth low self-control and delinquent activity can be influenced by multi-level factors, microsystem (aspects of the individual), exosystem (community or neighborhood), and macrosystem (cultural context). Interactions and experiences assist youth in understanding and interpreting the world around them. As such, the ecological theory helps us to identify, explain, and predict influences to negative youth outcomes in hopes to be effective in developing strategies in order to modify these outcomes.

### 3.4 Intersectional Theory

Intersectionality approaches, approaches that focus on understanding the multiple and cross-cutting systems of oppression and privilege in social life, have steadily made their way into a number of social science disciplines and have been applied to a number of theoretical and

empirical issues. Nonetheless, these approaches have not been applied as fully in the study of youth delinquency and/or other negative youth outcomes. This study will incorporate an intersectional analysis, at least in terms of how findings are analyzed and discussed, because race or gender cannot be understood fully as separate entities. Rather, we must look at how race or gender variations in the effects of neighborhood context factors, for instance, may be more complicated and intertwined than they might look on the surface. Therefore, we must look at how the differences and commonalities among youth (as they are affected by perceived neighborhood disorganization and perceived threats to safety) might be determined by both race and gender at the same time and, in some cases, also poverty (Small and Newman 2001). Race and/or gender experiences are simultaneously experienced with, filtered through, and influenced by other social locations (Andersen and Collins 2007).

The tenets of intersectionality can be described using the “Matrix of Domination” concept developed by Patricia Hill Collins (as cited in Andersen and Collins, 2007). Andersen and Collins (2007) stated that the matrix of domination “posits multiple, interlocking levels of domination that stem from the societal configuration of race, class, and gender relations,” (2007: 5). In addition, intersectionality approaches suggest that race, gender, and other background characteristics represent social constructs, given meaning by society for purposes of those within society. The meanings assigned to these constructs dictate “individual consciousness, group interaction, and group access to institutional power and privileges,” (Anderson and Collins 2007: 5). For example, how a person interacts with their world (or in the case of this study, their neighborhood environment) is based upon how they view the world and themselves, and the way that they view themselves and their world is defined partially by their race, gender, and other social locations. In addition, “race, class, and gender relations are embedded and have meaning

at the micro level of individuals' everyday lives as well as at the macro level of community and social institutions.” (Weber 2010: 21). Thus, they affect individuals (such as youth in their middle childhood years) and communities or neighborhoods at a broader level. An intersectionality framework also allows us to compare groups with different social locations and understand the variations we might see in the effects of moderating or dependent variables on race- or gender-based groups in the sample.

### 3.5 Linking Intersectionality to Youth Outcomes

Gender and race both simultaneously affect involvement in delinquent activities and low self-control. For instance, it is widely acknowledged that men commit more crime than women and Blacks supposedly commit more crime than non-blacks (Brown 2015, Belknap 2007). Very specific race-gender groups might think and act in ways that are defined by both their gender and race simultaneously, and these ideas can be explored in studies such as this. For example, it has been found in previous research that African American females have higher rates of violence than white females but less than African American males (Simpson 1991).

Instead of examining youth outcomes solely through the lens of race or the lens of gender, it is necessary to consider other social categories to fully understand variations in youth outcomes. In her article, “Oppression,” Marilyn Frye describes a bird locked in a cage as an example of systems of oppression. She stated, “the bird is surrounded by a network of systematically related barriers, none of which would be the least hindrance to its flight, but which, by their relations to each other, are as confining as the solid walls of a dungeon,” (Anderson and Collins 2007: 32). While one category may be more salient at one time or another, race, class, and gender are intersecting categories of experiences. This means they all occur at once, simultaneously, and shape a unique social and personal experience for each

individual. Understanding this tent of intersectionality allows us to interpret the gender variations in the effects of neighborhood context factors and youth outcomes, and understand the unique experiences that certain youth might have because of their exact race-gender locations.

By utilizing the frameworks, Ecological theory and Intersectional theory, I bring focus to the impact the environment and social factors have in explaining youth outcomes. The Ecological theory focuses on how multiple levels of influences in a specific context or setting impacts behavior. The Intersectional theory focuses on how structural factors or intersections of identity, such as gender and race, impact ones experiences and behavior. These theories display the complex nature of lived experiences and how they explain and predict low self-control and delinquent activity.

## CHAPTER 4 METHODOLOGY

### *SHARE Study*

Data for this study comes from a larger Centers for Disease Control and Prevention funded study on intimate partner violence. The SHARE study (“Strengthening Supports for Healthy Relationships: A Gender-Sensitive, Mixed Methods Analysis of Protective Factors for Intimate Partner Violence”) is a collaboration between Wayne State University, Eastern Michigan University, and the Centers for Disease Control<sup>1</sup>. The overall objective of the project was to explore modifiable risk and protective factors associated with the development of intimate partner violence (IPV) offending, with a particular focus on gender differences and the role of technology as an avenue of both risk and resilience. The specific aims of the project were to examine the individual, relational, community, and social risk and protective factors associated with perpetration of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, and stalking in intimate relationships through a gender-sensitive, developmental perspective and to examine the relationship between school policy, procedures, and student services to address IPV, and the attitudes and behavior of youth.

Initial recruitment began with seven school districts representing 19 schools. Ultimately, the study sample was based on six school districts in Southeast Michigan and 13 schools. Using publically available crime data, six community indicators of violent crime from the Michigan State Police Department were combined to derive an index which was used to stratify overall recruitment of school districts by varying levels of community violence and concentrated disadvantage (high, middle, low). SHARE study team members met with school principals and procured mailing lists for 6th and 9th graders. A packet containing an introductory letter and

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<sup>1</sup> Excerpts from SHARE study grant used with permission of principal investigators.



information sheet was sent home to all 6th and 9th grade parents detailing the study and explaining a passive consent process; parents could “opt-out” their students by calling the school or SHARE research office, or by returning a section of the parent letter to the school or to the SHARE study team.

After excluding parental opt-outs, a computer-based random number generator was used to select 100 participants and 10-15 “alternates” at each school (total N of 1300). Surveys were completed by 1236 youth. In the first year, 47% of the sample was in the sixth grade and 53% in the ninth grade. Additionally, 52% were female and 48% were male with four students not reporting their gender in the survey<sup>2</sup>. This study will utilize data from the first cohort of 6<sup>th</sup> grade youth. Youth in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade were chosen as this stage in education corresponds to middle childhood. As mentioned above, the origins of persistent problematic youth outcomes are found during middle childhood. As a result, it is extremely important to focus research at earlier developmental stages for youth, specifically, because things happen in middle childhood that shapes the life course.

The survey instrument was developed by the university researchers utilizing primarily previously validated scales and subsequent modifications to better address protective factors were made in collaboration with CDC personnel. The survey instrument consisted of eight major components in conjunction with general demographic items, including: *intimate partner violence, societal influence, community context, social engagement, normative cognitions, self-control, trauma exposure, and social desirability*. In addition to the measures specific to the eight major components the research team collected basic demographic information for

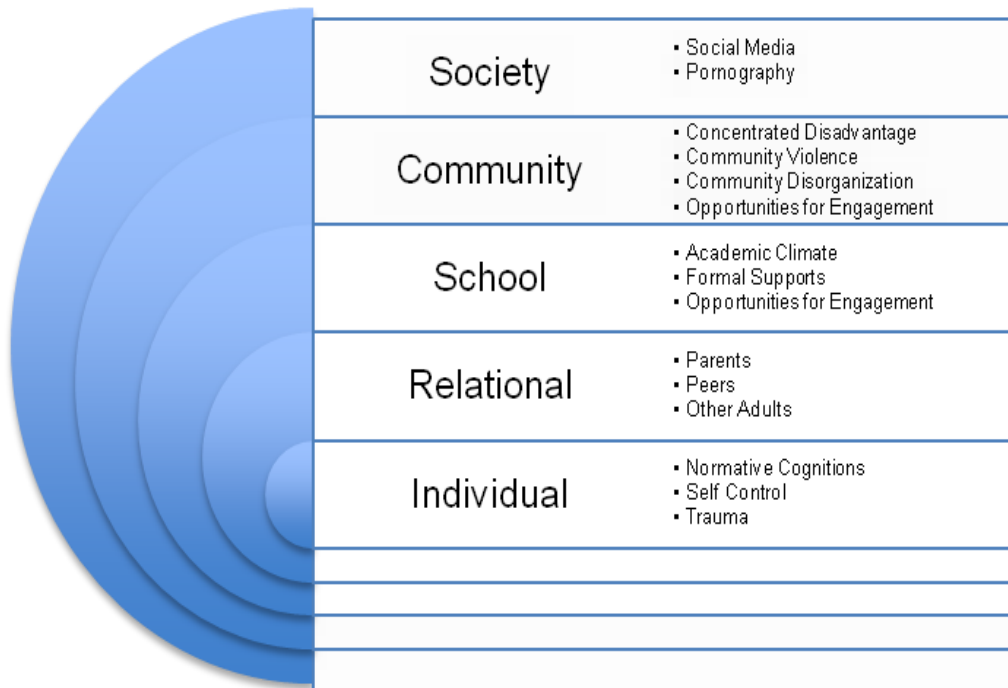
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<sup>2</sup> Principal investigators have given permission for all data analysis from this study.

participating students, including gender, age, grade level, family composition, school performance and activities endorsed, and racial/ethnic identity.

As figure 1 indicates, the SHARE study examined aspects in the individual, family, peer group, school, community and society to examine the modifiable risk and protective factors for unhealthy relationship behavior among youth, including the ways that experiences and attitudes impact future behaviors. The study conceptualized community context utilizing four separate constructs: *community violence*; *exposure to violence*; *concentrated disadvantage*; and *school environment*. For purposes of this study I use the community violence construct to conceptualize neighborhood context. More specifically, measurements of personal safety, which measures perceived threats to personal safety, and neighborhood disorganization, which measures perceived neighborhood disorganization are utilized.

Figure 1: Social Ecological Model of IPV



This research focuses on the neighborhood context factors that contribute to negative youth outcomes. Additionally, the role of community involvement and implications for gender and race variations will be investigated. The hypotheses that will be examined are:

- 1) Youth with high perceived neighborhood disorganization and perceived threats to personal safety are more likely to have low self-control and exhibit high delinquent activity.
- 2) Community involvement moderates the relationship between neighborhood context and self-control and delinquency.
- 3) Male youth are more likely to have low self-control and exhibit higher delinquent activity than females because of their neighborhood context. However, the neighborhood context influence on youth outcomes will still exist for girls.
  - a. The effect of perceived neighborhood disorganization on low self-control will be stronger for males.
  - b. The effect of perceived neighborhood disorganization on delinquent activity will be stronger for males.
  - c. The effect of perceived threats to personal safety on low self-control will be stronger for males.
  - d. The effect of perceived threats to personal safety on delinquent activity will be stronger for males.
- 4) African American youth are more likely to have low self-control and exhibit higher delinquent activity because of their neighborhood context. Race effect will diminish when controlling for neighborhood context.

- a. The effect of perceived neighborhood disorganization on low self-control will be stronger for black youth.
- b. The effect of perceived neighborhood disorganization on delinquent activity will be stronger for black youth.
- c. The effect of perceived threats to personal safety on low self-control will be stronger for black youth.
- d. The effect of perceived threats to personal safety on delinquent activity will be stronger for black youth.

*Variables:*

The survey used to collect the youth data includes scales that measure neighborhood context and youth behaviors. The independent variable in this study is neighborhood context. Neighborhood context is measured using survey scales on **perceived neighborhood disorganization** and **perceived personal safety**. The dependent variable in this study is youth behavior. Youth behavior is measured by **low self-control** and **delinquent activity** scales. This study also explores **community involvement** as a moderator in the relationship between neighborhood context and negative youth outcomes.

*Perceived Neighborhood Disorganization*

The SHARE study utilized the Neighborhood Disorganization scale (Thornberry, Krohn, Lizotte, Smith, & Tobin 2003), to measure the perception of crime, safety, and deterioration of the neighborhood. The independent variable, *perceived neighborhood disorganization* (PND), was measured using a 17 item scale. Items were measured on a 3-point Likert-type scale ranging where 1 = “not a problem” and 3 = “a big problem.” The internal consistency for this measure was found to be high ( $\alpha = .95$ ). The measure asked participants about their perceptions of how

problematic various neighborhood disorganization indicators were in the neighborhood in which they live. The measure included questions such as, how much of a problem is: “high unemployment”, “different racial or cultural groups who do not get along with each other”, “little respect for rules, laws and authority”, “abandoned houses or buildings”, “burglaries and thefts”, and “drug use of drug dealing in the open” (See Appendix C).

#### *Perceived Personal Safety*

The Personal Safety measure, developed by the Joyce Foundation Youth Survey (LH Research, Inc. 1993), assesses the degree to which a youth feels safe in school and the neighborhood. The independent variable, **perceived personal safety**, PPS, was measured using a 5 item scale. Items were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging where 0= “never” and 4= “always”. The internal consistency for this measure was found to be moderately high ( $\alpha = .65$ ). The measure asked participants about their perceptions of threats to personal safety. The measure included questions such as, how often do you think each of the following is true: “I live in a safe neighborhood,” I worry about my safety getting to and from school,” and “I see gang activity in my neighborhood” (See Appendix C).

#### *Low Self-control*

The measurement that assesses self-control comes from the Low Self-Control scale (Grasmick et al. 1993; Pratt and Cullen 2000; Delisi et al. 2003). This measurement assesses the youth’s level of self-control in a manner consistent with the Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) General Theory of Crime hypothesis. The dependent variable, **low self-control**, LSC, was measured using a 24 item scale. Items were measured on a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging where 1= “strongly disagree,” and 4= “strongly agree.” The internal consistency for this measure was found to be high ( $\alpha = .85$ ). This measure included items addressing impulsivity and risk

taking behavior. The measure included questions such as, how much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements: “I often act on the spur of the moment without stopping to think,” “sometimes I will take a risk just for the fun of it,” “if things I do upset people, it is their problem, not mine” and “I lose my temper pretty easily” (See Appendix C).

### *Delinquency*

The Delinquency Scale, developed from the National Youth Survey (Elliot, Huizinga, & Ageton 1985) was used to identify youth self-reported risk behavior within the last year. The dependent variable, **delinquency**, was measured using a 35 item scale. Items were measured on a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging where 1= “strongly disagree,” and 4= “strongly agree.” The internal consistency for this measure was found to be high ( $\alpha = .91$ ). The measure asked addressed a range of behaviors from property damage and drug use to attacking someone. The measure included questions such as, about how many times did you do the following in the past year: “attacked someone with the idea of seriously hurting or killing him/her,” “sold drugs,” “cheated on school tests,” and “avoided paying for such things as movies, bus rides, and food” (See Appendix C).

### *Community Involvement*

Another component of this study was the degree in which youth had meaningful connections with people and their community. The SHARE study utilized a measure that was developed for the Chicago Youth Development Project (Tolan, Gorman-Smith, & Henry 2001). The moderating variable, **community involvement**, CI, was measured using a 4 item scale. Items were measured on a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging where 1= “strongly disagree” and 4= “strongly agree.” The internal consistency for this measure was found to be moderate ( $\alpha = .50$ ). The measure asks student to indicate if they interact with people in the neighborhood, or

are organized in community organization. The measure included questions such as, how much do you agree or disagree with or how true are the following statements: “I know the names of most of the people on my block,” and I am involved in neighborhood or block organizations that deal with neighborhood issues or problems” (See Appendix C).

## CHAPTER 5 DATA ANALYSIS & RESULTS

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize participants' demographic characteristics. These analyses included means, standard deviations, frequencies and percentages, where appropriate. Pearson correlation coefficients were used to explore the nature of the relationship between variables. Additionally, regression analyses (specifically, Logistic and Hierarchical Regression) were utilized.

### Sample Demographics:

The final sample consisted of 588 6<sup>th</sup> grade youth. Youth were asked to provide their birthday. Age was then converted to years. The youth ages ranged from 9 to 13 years of age. The age variance may be due to any number of factors. For example, the students may have started school early or late, may have skipped a grade or been held back a year. The mean age was 11.5 years with 94.3% of the population being between 11 and 12 years old (see Table 1).

### *Gender:*

Gender was a self-reporting measure. Responses were limited to either "female" or "male." Fifty-one percent of the 6<sup>th</sup> grade youth identified as female, and 49 percent as male (see Table 1).

### *Race/Ethnicity:*

Ethnicity was a self-reporting measure. Youth were asked to select a response to the question, "what race or ethnicity do you identify with." Nearly 63% of the 6<sup>th</sup> grade youth identified as White, 19.9% identified as African American, 6.3% reported being Hispanic, 1.4% reported being Asian, 8.5% identified as Native American, and 1.2 percent reported being Arab American (see Table 1).

Table 1: Sample Characteristics of 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Youth



Sample Characteristics	N (= 588)	%
<b>Age</b>		
9	1	0.2
10	2	0.3
11	296	50.3
12	259	44.0
13	20	3.4
Missing	10	1.7
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	302	51.4
Male	286	48.6
<b>Race</b>		
African American	117	19.9
Arab American	7	1.2
Asian	8	1.4
Hispanic	37	6.3
Native American	50	8.5
White	367	62.4
Missing/Not Specified	2	0.3

#### Descriptive Statistics:

##### *Perceived Neighborhood Disorganization*

Using the scale mean for the variable PND, results indicated that youth reported generally low perceptions of neighborhood disorganization ( $M=1.35$ ,  $SD= 3.00$ ), with 3 original responses ranging from 1.00 to 3.00 (see Table 2).

While PND is a complex variable involving more than two responses, it was decided that perception of neighborhood disorganization should not be treated as a continuous variable. Transformation of this variable into a dichotomous variable will assist with effective analysis with hopes of uncovering more information about the variable's relationship to outcome variables. The transformation process was done with a median split. The median split is one method for turning a continuous variable into a categorical variable. Given the variable and what is being measured it was logical to split the variable into two groups- one with high PND and one with low PND. 51% of the youth responses fell within the range of 1.00 and 1.12. As a result,

those responses that were equal to or lower than the median of 1.12 were coded as 0= low/no perceived neighborhood disorganization (PND). 49% of youth responses were 1.13 or greater. As a result, those responses that were equal to or greater than 1.13 were coded as 1= high perceived neighborhood disorganization (PND). The mean score was .60. This indicates that 60% of youth reported some perception of neighborhood disorganization (see Table 3).

#### *Perceived Personal Safety*

Descriptive statistics using the scale mean for the PPS variable, results indicated that youth reported generally low perceptions of threats to their personal safety within the neighborhood ( $M=.70$ ,  $SD=.74$ ), with responses ranging from 0 to 4.00. Low scores on this measure means youth do not perceive threats to their personal safety within the neighborhood (see Tables 2 & 3).

#### *Low Self-control*

Using the scale mean for the LSC variable, descriptive statistics indicated that youth reported relatively few acts that would indicated low self-control ( $M= 2.26$ ,  $SD= 0.43$ ) with responses ranging from 1 to 4.00. A higher score on this measure means youth display features of low self-control (see Tables 2 & 3).

#### *Delinquency*

Using the scale mean for the variable, Delinquency, results indicated that youth reported generally low delinquent activity ( $M=.15$ ,  $SD=.30$ ), with 4 original responses ranging from 0 to 3.00 (see Table 2).

While delinquent activity is a complex variable, the original measure responses were frequencies. As such, it was decided that for data analysis purposes not to treat the variable as continuous. The transformation process was done with a median split. The median split is one

method for turning a continuous variable into a categorical variable. Given the variable and what is being measured it was logical to split the variable into two groups- one with delinquent activity and one without. 49% of youth responses fell below the median. As a result, those responses were coded as 0= no/low delinquent activity. 51% of responses were above the median and were coded as 1= high delinquent activity. The mean score of the transformed variable responses was .51. This indicates that 51% of youth reported delinquent activity (see Table 3).

### *Community Involvement*

The 4 items for this variable had two different response options. Questions 1 and 2 had a 4 point Likert-type scale while questions 3 and 4 were “true” or “false.” In order to perform descriptive statistics, correlations, and bivariate analysis the variable had to be transformed into uniform responses. Questions 1 and 2 were recorded as strongly disagree and disagree = false and strongly agree and agree = true. Using the scale mean for the CI variable, descriptive statistics indicated that youth reported relatively little community involvement (M= 0.39, SD= 0.28) with responses ranging from 0 to 1.00. A higher score on this measure means youth are involved with their community (see Tables 2 & 3).

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics Before Transformation of Variables

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
PND	580	1.00	3.00	1.35	0.48
PPS	580	0.00	4.00	0.70	0.74
LSC	584	1.00	4.00	2.26	0.43
Delinquency	584	0.00	3.00	0.15	0.30
CI	581	0.00	1.00	0.39	0.28
Valid N (listwise)	569				

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics After Transformation of Variables

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
PND	588	0.00	1.00	0.60	--

PPS	580	0.00	4.00	0.70	0.74
LSC	584	1.00	4.00	2.26	0.43
Delinquency	588	0.00	1.00	0.51	--
CI	581	0.00	1.00	0.39	0.28
Valid N (listwise)	569				

Bivariate correlations were conducted to examine the relationships between variables in the tested model and details are presented in Table 4. There is a positive, moderate correlation between low self-control and delinquency ( $r = .41$ ) suggesting that youth who participate in delinquent activity may also experience low self-control. As expected and outlined in the Table 4, perceived neighborhood disorganization is moderately correlated with perceived personal safety, ( $r = .38$ ). Community involvement has a positive, but very small correlation to both independent variables and both dependent variables.

Table 4: Descriptive statistics of means, standard deviation, correlation coefficients and Cronbach's alpha.

	M	SD	$\alpha$	PND	PPS	LSC	Delinquency	CI
PND	0.595	0.491	.95	1				
PPS	0.697	0.736	.65	.383**	1			
LSC	2.26	0.434	.85	.267**	.206**	1		
Delinquency	0.514	0.500	.91	.321**	.276**	.411**	1	
CI	0.391	0.278	.50	.008	.060	.040	.012	1

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

### Hypothesis Testing

Multiple regression and hierarchical regression are used in order to examine the relationship between perceived neighborhood disorganization and perceived threats to personal safety and low self-control and delinquent activity of 6<sup>th</sup> grade youth. Additional, hierarchical regression is used to explore the moderating effect of community involvement, gender, and race.

#### *Hypothesis 1:*

Youth with high perceived neighborhood disorganization and perceived threats to personal safety are more likely to have low self-control and exhibit high delinquent activity.

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine if perceived neighborhood disorganization and perceived threats to personal safety predicted low self-control. This portion of hypothesis 1 was supported. A significant regression equation was found,  $R^2 = .089$ ,  $F(2, 575) = 28.16$ ,  $p < .001$ . Participants' predicted self-control is equal to  $2.095 + .207 (\text{PND}) + .069 (\text{PPS})$ . Participant's problems with low self-control are predicted to increase when perception of neighborhood disorganization is present and perceived threat to personal safety increases. PPS and PND are significant predictors of low self-control,  $p\text{-value} < .05$  (see Table 5).

Table 5: Summary of Regression Analysis for Perceived Personal Safety and Perceived Neighborhood Disorganization Predicting Low Self Control of 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Youth:

Variables	Model 1				
	(b)	SEb	Beta	t	p
PND	.207	.038	.234	5.443	.000
PPS	.069	.026	.116	2.694	.007
$R^2$	.089				
$R^2$ Change	.089				
F change	28.163				
df1,df2	2, 575				

A logistic regression was conducted to determine if perceived neighborhood disorganization and perceived threats to personal safety predict delinquency in 6<sup>th</sup> grade youth. Delinquency was coded as a discrete variable where No = 0 and Yes = 1. Findings suggest that this portion of hypothesis 1 is supported as data indicated that perceived threats to personal safety and perceived neighborhood disorganization are significant predictors of delinquent activity. As shown in Table 6, the overall model was significant,  $\chi^2(1) = 76.305$ ,  $p < .001$ . The -2 log likelihood is 727.498, Cox & Snell  $R^2$  is .123, and Nagelkerke  $R^2$  is .164. Both predictors significantly contribute to the classification. PND significantly increases the likelihood of youth delinquent activity,  $B = 1.076$ ,  $\text{Wald}(1) = 31.780$ ,  $p < .001$ . Youth with higher PND are more likely to be involved in delinquent activity. As such, the odds of a youth with higher perceptions

of neighborhood disorganization being involved in delinquent activity are 1.93 times higher than those of youth who do not have high PND.

PPS also significantly increases the likelihood of delinquent activity,  $B = .543$ ,  $\text{Wald}(1) = 15.192$ ,  $p < .001$ . The final model is reported in Table 6. The current model correctly classified 56.7% of cases for youth who had not exhibited delinquent behavior. The model also correctly classifies 75.3% of cases for youth who were involved in delinquent activity. The overall accuracy of classification is 66.2%. Additionally, youth with high PPS are more likely to be involved in delinquent activity. The odds that youth with increased perceived threats to personal safety being involved in delinquent activity are 72% greater than those with lower perceived threats to personal safety.

Table 6: Summary of Regression Analysis for Perceived Personal Safety and Perceived Neighborhood Disorganization Predicting Delinquent Activity of 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Youth

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig	Exp(B)	95% CI for Exp(B)	
							Lower	Upper
PND	1.076	.191	31.780	1	.000	2.932	2.017	4.261
PPS	.543	.139	15.192	1	.000	1.721	1.310	2.260
-2 Log likelihood		727.498						
Cox & Snell R Square		.123						
Nagelkerke R Square		.164						
Chi-square		76.305						
df		2						

*Hypothesis 2:*

Community involvement moderates the relationship between neighborhood context and self-control and delinquency.

A hierarchical regression model was tested to determine if the addition of community involvement as a moderation term to the existing regression model improved the prediction of low self-control among 6<sup>th</sup> grade youth. Hypothesis 2 was not supported. The first step in

hierarchical regression included the two predictors and the moderator- Community Involvement, (see Table 7 Model 1). The second step included the two predictors, the moderator, with the addition of the product terms (see Table 7 Model 2). This allowed me to determine if the interaction term was statistically significant. In Model 2, the change in  $R^2$  change is 0,  $F$  Change = .125,  $p = .882$ , meaning this model was not statistically significant as there was no increase in the variation explained by the addition of the community involvement interaction term. Model 1 results indicated that increased PPS ( $b = .065$ ,  $SEb = .026$ ,  $\beta = .108$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and increased PND ( $b = .213$ ,  $SEb = .038$ ,  $\beta = .241$ ,  $p < .001$ ) were both associated with low self-control. Results from the regression analysis revealed that community involvement is not displaying a moderating effect on the relationship between perceived neighborhood disorganization, perceived threats to personal safety and the outcome variable low self-control. This allows for the conclusion that relationship between PND, PPS and LSC does not depend on community involvement.

In order to test the role of community involvement as a moderating variable for PPS, PND and delinquent activity, hierarchical logistic regression was used. A hierarchical logistic regression was conducted using PND, PPS, and CI as independent variables in the first block, and delinquent activity as the dependent variable, the product terms for  $PND \times CI$  and  $PPS \times CI$  were used as independent variables in the second block. Results for the second block were not significant, (see Table 8 Model 2). In this case, note that PND contributed significantly to the prediction ( $p = .002$ ) but other independent variables PPS ( $p = .062$ ), CI ( $p = .855$ ) and moderators,  $PND \times CI$  ( $p = .995$ ) and  $PPS \times CI$  ( $p = .818$ ) did not. Also -2 log likelihood is reduced to 721.306 from 721.368. These results indicate that when CI is included in the equation PPS does not add significance to the prediction. Additionally, the role of CI is not displaying a

moderating effect on the relation between PND and delinquent activity and PPS and delinquent activity.

Model 1, as seen below in Table 8, is superior to Model 2 in terms of overall model fit. The block chi-square is significant at the .001 level,  $\chi^2 = 75.541$  with  $df = 3$ . As seen in table 8 Model 1, the -2 log likelihood is 721.368, Cox & Snell  $R^2$  is .123, and Nagelkerke  $R^2$  is .164. While the coefficients on the PND and PPS variables are statistically significant at the .001 level, the coefficient for CI is not. Consistent with Model 2, CI is not displaying a moderating effect on the relation between PND and delinquent activity and PPS and delinquent activity. Overall correct classification is 66.1%. The correct classification is 56.4% for the no group, and 75.4% for the yes group. Results from the regression analysis revealed that community involvement is not displaying a moderating effect on the relationship between perceived neighborhood disorganization, perceived threats to personal safety and outcome variables delinquent activity.



Table 7: Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Community Involvement as Moderator for Variables Predicting Low Self-Control:

Variables	Model 1					Model 2				
	(b)	SEb	Beta	t	p	(b)	SEb	Beta	t	p
PPS	.065	.026	.108	2.501	.013	.055	.050	.092	1.101	.271
PND	.213	.038	.241	5.566	.000	.242	.070	.274	3.470	.001
CI	.051	.063	.032	.810	.418	.079	.106	.050	.746	.456
PNDxCI						-.072	.145	-.048	-.501	.617
PPSxCI						.021	.099	.021	.216	.829
R <sup>2</sup>	.091					R <sup>2</sup>	.092			
R <sup>2</sup> Change	.091					R <sup>2</sup> Change	.000			
F Change	19.052					F Change	.125			
df1, df2	3, 569					df1, df2	2, 567			

Table 8: Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Community Involvement as Moderator for Variables Predicting Delinquent Activity:

Variables	Model 1						Model 2					
	B	S.E.	Wald	Df	Sig	Exp(B)	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig	Exp(B)
PND	1.061	.192	30.622	1	.000	2.890	1.067	.350	9.305	1	.002	2.906
PPS	.554	.140	15.614	1	.000	1.741	.502	.269	3.489	1	.062	1.652
CI	-.018	.324	.003	1	.955	.982	-.102	.561	.033	1	.855	.903
PNDxCI							-.005	.726	.000	1	.995	.995
PPSxCI							.124	.539	.053	1	.818	1.132
-2 Log likelihood			721.368				-2 Log likelihood			721.306		
Cox & Snell R Square			.123				Cox & Snell R Square			.123		
Nagelkerke R Square			.164				Nagelkerke R Square			.164		
Chi-Square			75.541				Chi-Square			75.602		
df			3				df			5		

*Hypothesis 3:*

Male youth are more likely to have low self-control and exhibit higher delinquent activity than females because of their neighborhood context. However, the neighborhood context influence on youth outcomes will still exist for girls.

A hierarchical regression model was tested to determine if the addition of gender of the youth as a moderation term to the existing regression model improved the prediction of low self-control among 6<sup>th</sup> grade youth. Hypothesis 3 was not supported as gender is not displaying a moderating effect on the relationship between variables under study. The first step in hierarchical regression included the two predictors and the second moderator- gender (see Table 9 Model 1). The second step included the two predictors, the moderator, with the addition of the product terms (see Table 9 Model 2). This allowed me to determine if the interaction term was statistically significant. In Model 2, the  $R^2$  change is .005,  $F$  Change = 1.561,  $p = .871$ , however, the interaction between Gender and PND and Gender and PPS were not statistically significant, suggesting that the effect of PPS and PND on self-control does not depend on gender. Results from Model 1 indicated greater PPS ( $b = .070$ ,  $SEb = .026$ ,  $\beta = .118$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and greater PND ( $b = .204$ ,  $SEb = .038$ ,  $\beta = .231$ ,  $p < .001$ ) were both associated with low self-control. Findings suggested that the effect of perceived neighborhood disorganization and perceived threats to personal safety on low self-control does not depend on gender.

A second hierarchical logistic regression was conducted using PND, PPS, and Gender as independent variables in the first block, the product terms of PNDxGender and PPSxGender were added in the second block, with delinquent activity as the dependent variable. Results for the second block were not significant. Gender did not display a moderating effect on the relation between PND and delinquent activity and PPS and delinquent activity. Model 1, as seen below in Table 10, is superior to Model 2 in terms of overall model fit. The block chi-square is significant

at the .001 level,  $\chi^2 = 78.357$  with  $df = 3$ . The -2 log likelihood is 725.445, Cox & Snell  $R^2$  is .126, and Nagelkerke  $R^2$  is .169 (see Table 10 Model 1). While the coefficients on the PND and PPS variables are statistically significant at the .001 level, the coefficient for Gender is not. Consistent with Model 2, Gender is not displaying a moderating effect on the relation between PND and delinquent activity and PPS and delinquent activity. Overall correct classification is 67.2%. The correct classification is 60.9% for the no group, and 73.3% for the yes group. Findings suggested that the effect of perceived neighborhood disorganization and perceived threats to personal safety on delinquent activity does not depend on gender.

Table 9: Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Gender as Moderator for Variables Predicting Low Self-Control:

Variables	Model 1					Model 2				
	(b)	SEb	Beta	t	p	(b)	SEb	Beta	t	p
PPS	.070	.026	.118	2.744	.006	.073	.036	.122	2.009	.045
PND	.204	.038	.231	5.357	.00	.261	.053	.295	4.893	.045
Gender	.56	.035	.065	1.628	.104	.133	.057	.152	2.318	.021
PNDxMale						-.119	.076	-.125	-1.565	.118
PPSxMale						-.008	.051	-.012	-.162	.871
R <sup>2</sup>	.093					R <sup>2</sup>	.098			
R <sup>2</sup> Change	.093					R <sup>2</sup> Change	.005			
F Change	19.712					F Change	1.561			
df1, df2	3, 574					df1, df2	2, 572			

Note: Gender Variables coded: 0= Female, 1= Male

Table 10: Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Gender as Moderator for Variables Predicting Delinquent Activity:

Variables	Model 1						Model 2					
	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig	Exp(B)	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig	Exp(B)
PND	.549	.140	15.461	1	.000	1.732	.879	.265	1.981	1	.001	2.408
PPS	1.065	.191	31.030	1	.000	2.902	.440	.189	5.422	1	.020	1.553
Male	.255	.178	2.048	1	.152	1.291	-.159	.305	.272	1	.602	.853
PNDxMale							.412	.384	1.151	1	2.83	1.510
PPSxMale							.261	.284	19.947	1	.358	1.298
-2 Log likelihood	725.445						-2 Log likelihood	722.571				
Cox & Snell R Square	.126						Cox & Snell R Square	.131				
Nagelkerke R Square	.169						Nagelkerke R Square	.174				
Chi-Square	78.357						Chi-Square	81.231				
df	3						df	5				

Note: Gender Variables coded: 0= Female, 1= Male

*Hypothesis 4:*

African American youth are more likely to have low self-control and exhibit higher delinquent activity because of their neighborhood context. Race effect will diminish when controlling for neighborhood context.

A final hierarchical regression model was tested to explore whether the association between PPS and PND and LSC depends on the race of the youth. To make a more meaningful comparison between black students and white students all students who did not identify as either were removed from this statistical analysis. The first step in hierarchical regression included the two predictors and the third moderator- Race, (see Table 11 Model 1). Results from Model 1 indicated increased PND ( $b = .205$ ,  $SEb = .041$ ,  $\beta = .237$ ,  $p < .001$ ) was associated with low self-control. However, greater PPS was found not to be statistically significant in the model. ( $b = .054$ ,  $SEb = .030$ ,  $\beta = .087$ ,  $p > .05$ ).

The second step of the hierarchical regression included the two predictors, the moderator, with the addition of the product terms (see Table 11 Model 2). This allowed me to determine if the interaction term was statistically significant. In Model 2, interaction between PND and race was not statistically significant  $p = .250$ . However, the interaction between PPS and race was significant ( $b = .147$ ,  $SEb = .070$ ,  $\beta = .422$ ,  $p < .05$ ), suggesting that the effect of PPS on low self-control is related to the race of the youth.

Simple regression slopes for the association between PPS and Race were tested for Race= White and Race= Black. The simple slope tests of white youth revealed a significant association between PPS and low self-control ( $b = .088$ ,  $SEb = .034$ ,  $\beta = .140$ ,  $p < .005$ ) when controlling for PND. However, the simple slope test of black youth revealed the association was not statistically significant,  $p = .332$ . Figure 1 plots the simple slopes for the interaction. As such, this portion of

hypothesis 4, while not supported, did reveal that race moderates the relationship between PPS and LSC for white youth.

In order to explore the role of race in the relationship between delinquent activity and the predictor variables a hierarchical logistic regression was conducted using PND, PPS, and Race as independent variables in the first block, the product terms of PNDxRace and PPSxRace were added in the second block, with delinquent activity as the dependent variable. Results for the second block are not statistically significant. As a result, this portion of hypothesis 4 was not supported as results indicated that race is not a moderator delinquent activity and PND and PPS. Results for block 1 indicate that the overall model is significant,  $\chi^2 = 70.107$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p < .001$ . As seen in Table 12 Model 1, the -2 log likelihood is 586.921, Cox & Snell  $R^2$  is .137 and Nagelkerke  $R^2$  is .183. Overall correct classification is 69.2%. The correct classification is 66.7% for the no group, and 71.7% for the yes group.

Table 11: Summary of Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Low Self-control with Race as Moderator

Variables	Model 1					Model 2				
	(b)	SEb	Beta	t	p	(b)	SEb	Beta	t	p
PND	.205	.041	.237	4.944	.000	.426	.197	.492	2.165	.031
PPS	.054	.030	.087	1.811	.071	-.206	.127	-.331	-1.617	.107
Race	.120	.045	.120	2.673	.008	.151	.085	.152	1.789	.074
PNDxRace						-.122	.106	-.260	-1.152	.250
PPSxRace						-.147	.070	.422	2.096	.037
R <sup>2</sup>	.108					R <sup>2</sup>	.107			
R <sup>2</sup> Change	.108					R <sup>2</sup> Change	.009			
F Change	18.959					F Change	2.254			
df1, df2	3, 468					df1, df2	2, 466			

Note: Race Variable coded: 0= White, 1= Black

Figure 1: Simple Slope Test for Race

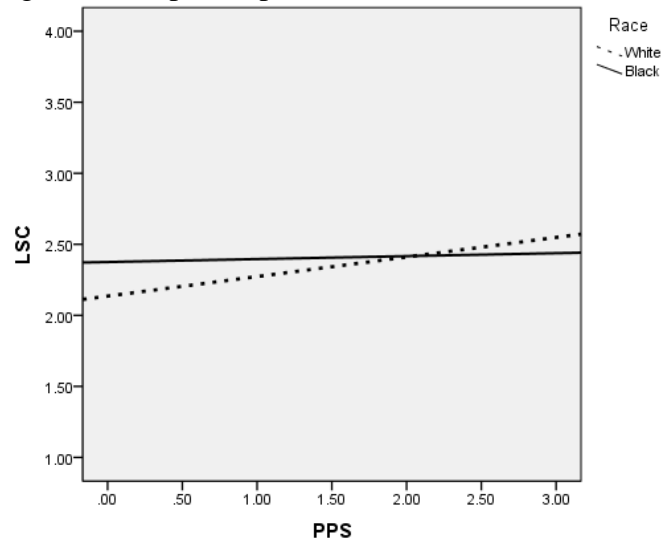


Table 12: Summary of Logistic Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Delinquent Activity with Race as Moderator

Variables	Model 1						Model 2					
	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig	Exp(B)	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig	Exp(B)
PND	1.011	.214	22.315	1	.000	2.748	.174	1.029	.029	1	.866	1.190
PPS	.432	.160	7.319	1	.007	1.540	-.216	.715	.091	1	.763	.800
Black	.846	.245	11.912	1	.001	2.331	1.420	.441	10.346	1	.001	4.139
PNDxRace							.467	.555	.710	1	.399	1.596
PPSxRace							.366	.391	.880	1	.348	1.443
-2 Log likelihood			586.921				-2 Log likelihood			584.341		
Cox & Snell R Square			.137				Cox & Snell R Square			.142		
Nagelkerke R Square			.183				Nagelkerke R Square			.190		
Chi-Square			70.107				Chi-Square			72.687		
Df			3				df			5		

Note: Race Variable coded: 0= White, 1= Black



## CHAPTER 6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this dissertation was to examine the role of perceived neighborhood disorganization and perceived threats to personal safety as predictors of youth delinquent activity and low self-control, among middle school students, specifically youth in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. An additional goal was to evaluate the significance of community involvement, race, and gender as moderators to the relationship of neighborhood context and youth outcomes. This chapter focuses on a discussion of findings from this research study, and the implications for policy, prevention, and intervention for youth. Additionally, there will be discussion of limitations of this study and future research on this topic. This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the effect of neighborhood context on youth self-control and delinquent activity?
2. How does community involvement moderate the relationship between neighborhood context and self-control and delinquency?
3. How does the effect of neighborhood context on youth self-control and delinquent activity vary by gender?
4. How does the effect of neighborhood context on youth self-control and delinquent activity vary by race?

### 6.1 Perceived Neighborhood Disorganization and Perceived Threats to Personal Safety

Hypothesis 1: Youth with high perceived neighborhood disorganization and perceived threats to personal safety are more likely to have low self-control and exhibit high delinquent activity.

#### *Perceived Neighborhood Disorganization*

It was expected that youth with increased perceived neighborhood disorganization would be more likely to have low self-control and participate in delinquent activity. This portion of the hypothesis was supported. As a result, one of the most critical findings from data analysis suggest that perceived neighborhood disorganization is a significant predictor of low self-control

and does increase the likelihood of youth participating in delinquent activity. These results are consistent with other literature on neighborhood disorganization.

Research has highlighted that neighborhood disorganization provokes disorder due to limited opportunity (Wilson 1996). It is well documented that neighborhoods with limited resources, services, and access to goods are detrimental and residents perceive little opportunity for growth and development. However, the implications of the findings in the present study are that it is not merely the absence of these resources or services the key component is that the youth actually perceive the disorganization.

Witherspoon and Hughes (2013) examined the presence and perception of positive and negative neighborhoods on youth outcomes. Their findings suggest that youth have a unique perception of neighborhood disorder that may be attributed to what is observable and tangible. Few studies have explored the role of neighborhood context from the viewpoint of middle childhood youth. The present study provided an opportunity to determine the relationship between neighborhood context and youth outcomes as reported by the youth. While neighborhood characteristics, such as employment rates, average salary, and parent data, were not collected in this study, there is evidence that perception of disorder in the world around them does in fact have an influence on youth outcomes.

As stated, findings suggest that participants' problems with self-control are predicted to increase when they perceive of neighborhood disorganization is . As such, youth in this study indicate that they are perceiving disorganization in their neighborhoods, and this may be a cause of their displays of low self-control. Related findings suggest that youth with higher perceived neighborhood disorganization are more likely to be involved in delinquent activity. Therefore, the odds of a youth with higher perceptions of neighborhood disorganization being involved in

delinquent activity was higher than those of youth who do not have high perceptions of neighborhood disorganization.

As I mentioned when discussing theoretical framework for this study, neighborhoods and people within the neighborhood are a part of the microsystem that directly impact youth in middle childhood, and the direct social interactions with social agents, the people in their environment, and their physical environment itself may determine how youth perceive and behave within these systems. Youth observation of problems within the neighborhood, such as burglaries, unemployment, or drug dealing, may develop a unique perception of their surroundings which, in turn, may contribute to their inability to control impulses or defer participation in delinquent activities.

#### *Perceived Threats to Personal Safety*

I also examined the relationship between perceived neighborhood disorganization and perceived threat to personal safety, and youth delinquent behavior and low self-control. It was expected that youth would exhibit low self-control and participate in delinquent activity as perceived threats to personal safety increased. This portion of the hypothesis was also supported. Important findings from data analysis suggest that perceived threats to personal safety is a significant predictor of low self-control and increases the likelihood of delinquent activity. The implications of this finding in the present study are that threats to personal safety may be an indication that participants have a true reaction to perceptions of danger or other general concerns about a lack of safety. This reactive behavior in youth may be a result of witnessing violence or being personally victimized in middle childhood or before. As is the case with the cyclical nature of violence, youth who are vulnerable to witnessing or being victims of violence

are themselves at risk for aggression, engagement in delinquent activity, and impulsive behavior/exhibiting low self-control (Stith et al. 2000; Eriksen 2006).

Consistent with previous literature, witnessing or being a victim of violence contributes to feelings of threats to personal safety and serves as a risk factor for future negative youth outcomes. DuRant et al. (1994) explored the social and psychological factors associated with the “use and nonuse of violence among Black adolescents living in a community with a high level of violent crime,” (DuRant et al.: 612). The study consisted of 225 males aged 11 to 19 years old in housing projects in an urban area. DuRant et al.’s results support the idea that youth violence is associated with exposure to violence and personal victimization, previous corporal punishment, and family conflict.

Youth who live in areas that promote a perceived threat to personal safety experience multiple social problems all at once. While perception is important so is the internalization of threats to personal safety and the subsequent behavior that youth might engage in. Specifically, what does a youth do when they perceive threats to personal safety? Further, how does their behavior allow them to function in this environment long term? Youth outcomes are influenced by how a youth is socialized to their environment and how that socialization determines how they perceive their environment. If a youth is socialized in an environment where delinquent activity is the norm they become desensitized to that activity. In these cases, delinquent activities become the norm and participation in these activities becomes a part of life. Additionally, low self-control is not seen as detrimental and, instead, may be a method of survival and aid in adjustment to environmental norms.

## 6.2 Importance of Community Involvement

Hypothesis 2: Community involvement moderates the relationship between neighborhood context and self-control and delinquency.

It was hypothesized that community involvement moderates the relationship between neighborhood context and self-control and delinquency. The results from the regression analysis revealed that community involvement is not displaying a moderating effect on the relationship between perceived neighborhood disorganization, perceived threats to personal safety and outcome variables, low self-control and delinquent activity. As such, the second hypothesis was not supported. One potential explanation for this is that while youth may not be involved in their community as defined in this study, they are instead active participants in community life. Descriptive findings suggest that 72% of the youth are active in sports outside of school, and 37% are involved in employment, community service, or volunteer work outside of school. However, there is no evidence that these things lead to a sense of connection or involvement in the community.

Another potential explanation for the fact that the second hypothesis is not supported, is that research on neighborhood involvement typically focuses on the role of social cohesion -- not community involvement -- in reducing negative outcomes. Social cohesion is collective efficacy: that is, "social cohesion among neighbors combined with their willingness to intervene on behalf of the common good," (Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls 1997). In Sampson et al.'s study, youth were able to respond to a four-item measure that focused on whether they knew the names of neighbors, talked to neighbors, were involved in general neighborhood issues or neighborhood work. As a result, they may know people in the neighborhood and some general problems but not be involved in the community as defined in this study. More research is needed on the possible

moderating effect of social cohesion and/or community involvement on youth in different age groups.

### 6.3 Importance of Gender

Hypothesis 3: Male youth are more likely to have low self-control and exhibit higher delinquent activity than females because of their neighborhood context. However, the neighborhood context influence on risk behaviors will still exist for girls.

This research also hypothesized (Hypotheses 3a-3d):

- a. The effect of perceived neighborhood disorganization on low self-control will be stronger for males.
- b. The effect of perceived neighborhood disorganization on delinquent activity will be stronger for males.
- c. The effect of perceived threats to personal safety on low self-control will be stronger for males.
- d. The effect of perceived threats to personal safety on delinquent activity will be stronger for males.

Findings of this study suggest that the effect of perceived neighborhood disorganization and perceived threats to personal safety does not depend on gender. In fact, the third hypothesis was not supported, as gender is not displaying as a moderating effect on the relationship between neighborhood context factors and youth delinquency or self-control.

There is still great debate as to the role of gender on youth outcomes (Alder 2011; Chesney-Lind 2004). Research has been divisive on the role that gender plays in determining or affecting youth outcomes. One school of thought is that males are simply larger, stronger, and are socialized to be more aggressive or dominant and, therefore, will commit crime as a result (Alder 2011). The other school of thought is that research currently being done is not sufficient in explaining negative outcomes for females so there is no clear understanding of the role of gender in determining youth outcomes (Chesney-Lind, 2004). The effect that gender might have on youth outcomes might be complicated, in that other social locations such as race or poverty

might also change the effect that gender has. There is a need for intersectional analyses of the effect of gender on youth outcomes, so that we can understand how gender is experienced simultaneously with other social locations and might not have a singular effect on youth outcomes (maybe, rather, an indirect or intertwined effect).

#### 6.4 Importance of Race

Hypothesis 4: African American youth are more likely to have low self-control and exhibit higher delinquent activity because of their neighborhood context. Race effect will diminish when controlling for neighborhood context.

The final hypotheses to be examined in this study were Hypotheses 4a-4d:

- a. The effect of perceived neighborhood disorganization on low self-control will be stronger for black youth.
- b. The effect of perceived neighborhood disorganization on delinquent activity will be stronger for black youth.
- c. The effect of perceived threats to personal safety on low self-control will be stronger for black youth.
- d. The effect of perceived threats to personal safety on delinquent activity will be stronger for black youth.

The analyses in this study also revealed that race itself was not statistically significant in determining negative youth outcomes in general. However, it was found that race did moderate the relationship between perceived threats to personal safety and low self-control and delinquent activity (but not between perceived neighborhood disorganization and the youth outcomes). Even more interesting was that the study revealed this impact is only true for White youth.

The interaction between perceived personal safety and race was significant, suggesting that the effect of perceived personal safety on low self-control is related to the race of the youth. Results also suggest that the race of the youth does in fact have an effect on engagement in delinquent activity for White youth. Implications for this are directly related to how White youth

perceive their surroundings and specifically, their perceptions of neighborhood disorganization and threats to personal safety.

As stated by Witherspoon and Hughes (2013) “Caucasian youth may live in more socioeconomically advantaged areas, thereby limiting their perceptions of neighborhood physical and social problems,” (Witherspoon and Hughes 2013). As such they may not perceive their neighborhoods as disorganized. However, this group of racially-privileged youth may be more vulnerable to the effects of perceived threats to personal safety. It is expected that youth who are desensitized to environments that threaten personal safety are less affected by the neighborhood context because they are already at such a high risk for neighborhood outcomes. Thus, when a youth has a new neighborhood experience that leads to a perceived threat to personal safety, they are more likely to be impacted and increase the risk of negative outcomes. An intersectional analysis also helps us understand these findings, in that White youth, by virtue of their socioeconomic privilege, may not experience neighborhood contexts in the same way as African American youth. The intersection of race and class position may allow White youth to react differently to perceived threats to personal safety.

### 6.5 Limitations of the Study

This study utilized data from a larger Centers for Disease Control and Prevention-funded study on intimate partner violence. The SHARE study (“Strengthening Supports for Healthy Relationships: A Gender-Sensitive, Mixed Methods Analysis of Protective Factors for Intimate Partner Violence”) was a collaboration between Wayne State University, Eastern Michigan University, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The objective of the larger project was to explore modifiable risk and protective factors associated with the development of intimate partner violence (IPV) offending, with a particular focus on gender differences and the



role of technology as an avenue of both risk and resilience. Consequently, data was not collected specifically for my purposes and there are general limitations to my use of the data. One limitation of utilizing secondary data is that there is no control over what questions are asked and how. For example, the survey questions for neighborhood disorganization asked youth questions on a range of items from unemployment to rape and gangs. Because youth may respond differently to different types of exposure to disorganization it is difficult to clearly understand what it is that youth are actually witnessing or experiencing and the relationship that specific exposure has to outcomes.

In addition, particular variables may be problematic. In this study, it was decided to leave the combination of measures for perceived threats to personal safety, perceived neighborhood disorganization, and delinquent in their original scales; they were not split into specific individual measures. As such, perceptions of threat to personal safety and neighborhood disorganization, for example, may be relative or perception is subjective. Perceived threats to personal safety and perceived neighborhood disorganization may actually vary based upon the level of self-control or type of delinquent activity. For example, youth who carry a weapon or have physically attacked someone with the intent of harming or killing them may have a very different perceived threat to personal safety status compared to a youth that cheats on a test or skipped classes without an excuse. As a result, further investigation of specific youth coping processes when stressed and/or when in distress is needed to understand specific delinquent activities and the relationship between those activities and the neighborhood context. Also, how they youth internalize their specific surroundings and how this relates to self-control should be investigated further.

Another limitation of this study is the sample itself. The individuals taking the survey were 6<sup>th</sup> grades who were approximately 11 years of age. Self-reporting surveys are not without risk, especially when the survey responses are based upon perceptions and reporting of 9- to 14-year-olds. For instance, what youth say they do in terms of low self-control and delinquent activity may not necessarily be consistent with their actual actions.

Finally, data for this study was collected in six school districts in Southeast Michigan. As such, results may not be generalized to youth in other geographic areas in Michigan, other states, or other countries.

## 6.6 Implications

In hopes of advancing literature and developing effective intervention and prevention strategies for the impact of neighborhood context on youth outcomes I examined the relationships between perceived neighborhood disorganization and perceived threat to personal safety and youth delinquent behavior and low self-control. Delinquency and low self-control results from a unique interaction with neighborhood context factors that occur during middle childhood. There needs to be far-reaching prevention, and/or intervention efforts that seek to 1) improve neighborhood conditions; 2) combat low self-control; and 3) reduce delinquent activity.

Funds drive action, and policy drives the flow of funds. Organizations and companies that seek to improve the conditions of neighborhoods where there is high unemployment, abandoned houses and general crime need resources and support. This past year the State of Michigan allocated \$765 million to juvenile justice (Michigan Department of Health and Human Services 2015). Rather than allocating those funds to prevention and improving our neighborhoods we have had to be reactionary and use the funds for programs that have focused largely on youth offenders. Our policy is not being written to improve neighborhoods but instead

to punish already vulnerable and oppressed groups. For example, the State of Michigan has been fighting for nearly 4 years to pass a bill that will cause families to lose public benefits if a youth is truant in school. Instead, policy should be focusing on revitalization and restructuring plans for neighborhoods, and preventing youth exposure to violence and other negative community influences. For example, providing a safe bus system, appropriate conditions in urban schools, and lighting for youth to safely travel through their neighborhoods might be the exact preventive measures that could increase self-control and decrease delinquent behavior. The hope is that this dissertation provides tangible evidence that allows us to focus on improving neighborhoods in order to improve youth outcomes.

Very little research has focused specifically on understanding the relationship of neighborhood context on youth outcomes for middle school youth. The focus has traditionally been on neighborhood disorganization and family processes, victimization, or school outcomes for adolescents. However, middle childhood is the period within which youth begin to make moral judgments and justifications for their behavior (whether negative or positive). It is within this time period where prevention and intervention strategies could be most effective and should be focused. Efforts to combat low self-control should be sensitive to developmental needs of middle childhood youth. This is an argument supported by several researchers (Del Giudice 2014; Ellis et al., 2009).

According to Moffitt et al. (2011), “early childhood intervention that enhances self-control is likely to bring a greater return on investment than harm reduction programs targeting adolescents alone,” (Moffitt 2011). Youth at this developmental stage are still developing a moral code to guide their behaviors. As a result, programs should focus on providing youth realistic evidence of the consequences of their behaviors and actions. Through this research I

have been able to identify several types of delinquent actions and behaviors displayed due to low self-control, and this information can be used to develop effective and efficient prevention and intervention programming.

Lastly, efforts should be deployed in multiple settings and targeted to specific race-gender groups of youth in their middle childhood years. There should be significant programming in the home with families of middle childhood youth to assist with the development and socialization of healthy behaviors and responses to neighborhood context. There should also be programming for neighborhoods and communities at large, and the focus should be on how to reinvent the concept of neighborhoods and safety. There should also be a focus on the potential race- and class-based effects of perceived threats to personal safety, and the ways in which to make all neighborhoods reach equitable safety standards. Just because African American youth may not seem like they are as affected by a perceived threat to safety does not mean that their neighborhoods are not dangerous. Or just because White youth might look like they are more affected by perceived threats to safety might not show us enough about neighborhood contexts and why they are problematic. Getting to the bottom of perceptions of threats to personal safety and the effect of perceptions on behavior is key, and understanding the true race- and class-based nature of the links between perception and behavior will lead to the development of better, more comprehensive interventions for youth. Similarly, if there is no consensus about how gender might affect perceived neighborhood disorganization or threats to personal safety, or how gender affects delinquency and low self-control, then much more work needs to be done to understand these potential effects to, in turn, allow us to create better policy and better interventions that pay attention to the complex and intertwined social locations of youth in middle childhood.

### 6.7 Need for Further Research

In addition to further exploring the effects of community involvement, race, and gender, future research on this topic should sample youth from different geographic locations, with special focus on inclusion of youth in large urban settings. Large urban settings, with their variations in neighborhood contexts, can teach us more about the differences and commonalities across neighborhood settings and the varied effects of neighborhood contexts on certain groups of youth. Future research should also seek to identify the specific neighborhood conditions and characteristics that are related to low self-control and delinquent activity in order to support or refute the findings of this study. A third consideration for future research is a qualitative research study, centered around interviews or focus groups, and designed to examine the specific neighborhood conditions that led to specific youth outcomes among diverse race-gender groups. A qualitative study should allow youth to discuss their specific exposures within the context of their specific neighborhoods and to explain the unique links between perceptions and behavior in open-ended ways.

### 6.8 Conclusion

The predictors of negative youth outcomes will continue to be debated as stakeholders seek resources to improve the lives of youth. There are those that believe family and peer interactions are the primary influences on youth behavior. Yet, there are those who argue that witnessing and victimization influences youth behavior more fully than other socialization agents. While these discussions and debates continue, studies of neighborhood context will hopefully fuel the next wave of prevention and intervention strategies.

While it is an old cliché, the children really are our future. Some youth are hardened by and accepting of the negativity around them. These youth are exhibiting the signs of being a

product of their environment, their neighborhoods. They are exhibiting the hallmarks of delinquency (e.g., drinking, drugs, and theft) and low self-control, (e.g., lack of regard for others and the consequences of their actions). And I hope that we're taking notice.

If attention is not given to the effects that our neighborhoods are having on youth in middle childhood as they develop, then we risk losing generations of strong, competent, and ethical participants in society. This dissertation examined the impact of neighborhood context factors on negative youth outcomes, among middle school students. In addition, this study explored three potential moderators of this impact: community involvement, race and gender. The overall goal of the dissertation was to extend social science knowledge on middle childhood delinquent activity and low self-control. It is hoped that this research contributes by hinting at new and different strategies for negotiating and researching youth outcomes, so that we can look forward to better futures for youth in middle childhood.

**APPENDIX A**

## Demographic Information

Are you:      ☐ Male      ☐ Female

What is your birthday? \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ (month/day/year)

What grade are you in?

☐ 6th    ☐ 7th    ☐ 8th    ☐ 9th    ☐ 10th    ☐ 11th

What is the race or ethnicity you identify with (fill in all that apply)?

<input type="radio"/> a. Black/African American/Caribbean American	<input type="radio"/> e. Native American
<input type="radio"/> b. White/Caucasian	<input type="radio"/> f. Arab American
<input type="radio"/> c. Hispanic/Latino/Chicano/Puerto Rican	<input type="radio"/> g. I do not consider myself a member of the above. I consider myself:
<input type="radio"/> d. Asian/Asian American/Pacific Islander	_____

**APPENDIX B****Community Involvement Scale**

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements or how true are the following statements?

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
a. I regularly stop and talk with people in my neighborhood.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. I know the names of most of the people on my block.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	<b>True</b>		<b>False</b>	
c. I am involved in neighborhood or block organizations that deal with neighborhood issues or problems.	<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>	
d. I have done volunteer work in the last year to benefit my neighborhood.	<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>	



**APPENDIX C****Neighborhood Disorganization Scale**

Thinking of your neighborhood, how much of a problem is...

	<b>Not a problem</b>	<b>Sort of a problem</b>	<b>A big problem</b>
a. High unemployment?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Different racial or cultural groups who do not get along with each other?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Vandalism, buildings and personal belongings broken and torn up?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Little respect for rules, laws and authority?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. Drunks and junkies?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. Prostitution?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. Abandoned houses or buildings?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h. Sexual assaults or rapes?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
i. Burglaries and thefts?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
j. Gambling?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
k. Run down and poorly kept buildings and yards?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
l. Syndicate, mafia or organized crime?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
m. Assaults and muggings?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
n. Street gangs or delinquent gangs?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
o. Homeless street people?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
p. Drug use or drug dealing in the open?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
q. Buying or selling stolen goods?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**APPENDIX D****Personal Safety Scale**

How often do you think each of the following is true?

	<b>Never</b>	<b>Seldom</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Always</b>
a. I have been affected personally by violence.	O	O	O	O	O
b. I live in a safe neighborhood	O	O	O	O	O
c. I worry about my safety getting to and from school.	O	O	O	O	O
d. I worry about my safety in school.	O	O	O	O	O
e. I see gang activity in my neighborhood.	O	O	O	O	O

**APPENDIX E****Low Self-Control Scale**

How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
a. I often act on the spur of the moment without stopping to think.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. I don't devote much thought and effort to preparing for the future.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. I often do whatever brings me pleasure now even at the cost of some distant goal.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. I'm more concerned with what happens to me in the short run than in the long run.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. I frequently try to avoid projects that I know will be difficult.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. When things get complicated, I tend to quit or withdraw.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. The things in life that are the easiest to do bring me the most pleasure.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h. I dislike really hard tasks that stretch my abilities to the limit.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
i. I like to test myself every now and then by doing something a little risky.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
j. Sometimes I will take a risk just for the fun of it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
k. I sometimes find it exciting to do things for which I might get in trouble.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
l. Excitement and adventure are more important to me than security.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
m. I would almost always rather do something physical than something mental.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
n. I usually feel better when I'm on the move than when I'm	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

	sitting and thinking.				
o.	I like to get out and do things more than I like to read or think about ideas.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
p.	I seem to have more energy and need for activity than most other people my age.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
q.	I try to look out for myself first even if it makes things hard for other people.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
r.	If things I do upset people, it is their problem, not mine.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
s.	I'm not very sympathetic to other people when they are having problems.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
t.	I'll try to get things I want even when I know it causes problems for other people.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
u.	I lose my temper pretty easily.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
v.	Often, when I am angry at people, I feel more like hurting them than talking to them about why I am angry.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
w.	When I am really angry, other people better stay away from me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
x.	When I have a serious disagreement with someone, it is usually hard for me to talk calmly about it without getting upset.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**APPENDIX F****Delinquency Scale**

About how many times did you do the following IN THE PAST YEAR?

	Never	1 time	2-4 times	5-9 times	10 or more times	If you did this, at what age did you <u>first</u> do this?
a. Purposely damaged or destroyed property belonging to your parents or other family members?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
b. Purposely damaged or destroyed property that did not belong to you (not counting family)?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
c. Stolen (or tried to steal) a motor vehicle, such as a car or motorcycle?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
d. Stolen (or tried to steal) something worth more than \$50?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
e. Knowingly bought, sold or held stolen goods (or tried to do any of these things)?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
f. Thrown objects (such as rocks or bottles) at cars or people?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
g. Ran away from home?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
h. Lied about your age to gain entrance or to buy something; for example, lying about age to buy liquor or get into a movie?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
i. Carried a hidden weapon?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
j. Stolen (or tried to steal) things worth \$5 or less?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
k. Attacked someone with the idea of seriously hurting or killing him/her?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
l. Been paid, or paid someone, for	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	

About how many times did you do the following IN THE PAST YEAR?

		Never	1 time	2-4 times	5-9 times	10 or more times	If you did this, at what age did you <u>first</u> do this?
	doing sexual things?						
m.	Been involved in gang fights?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
n.	Sold drugs?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
o.	Cheated on school tests?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
p.	Stolen money or other things from your parents or other members of your family?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
q.	Hit (or threatened to hit) a teacher or other adult at school?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
r.	Hit (or threatened to hit) one of your parents?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
s.	Hit (or threatened to hit) other students?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
t.	Been loud, rowdy, or unruly in a public place (disorderly conduct)?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
u.	Taken a vehicle for a ride (drive) without the owner's permission?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
v.	Had (or tried) to do something sexual with someone against their will?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
w.	Used force to get money or things from other students?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
x.	Used force to get money or things from other people (not students)?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
y.	Avoided paying for such things as movies, bus rides, and food?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
z.	Been drunk in a public place?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
aa.	Stolen (or tried to steal) things	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	

About how many times did you do the following IN THE PAST YEAR?

		Never	1 time	2-4 times	5-9 times	10 or more times	If you did this, at what age did you <u>first</u> do this?
	worth between \$5 and \$50?						
ab.	Stolen (or tried to steal) something at school, such as someone's coat from a classroom, locker, or cafeteria, or a book from the library?	O	O	O	O	O	
ac.	Broken into a building or vehicle (or tried to break in) to steal something or just to look around?	O	O	O	O	O	
ad.	Skipped classes without an excuse?	O	O	O	O	O	
ae.	Been suspended from school?	O	O	O	O	O	
af.	Used alcoholic beverages?	O	O	O	O	O	
ag.	Used marijuana (pot/grass)?	O	O	O	O	O	
ah.	Used other illegal drugs (acid/speed/coke/smack)?	O	O	O	O	O	
ai.	Drank more than 5 alcoholic beverages on one occasion.	O	O	O	O	O	

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**ABSTRACT****DELINQUENCY AND SELF-CONTROL OUTCOMES FOR YOUTH  
IN MIDDLE CHILDHOOD: VARIATIONS BY NEIGHBORHOOD  
CONTEXT, RACE AND GENDER**

by

**TAKISHA V. LASHORE****August 2016****Advisor:** Dr. Heather Dillaway**Major:** Sociology**Degree:** Doctor of Philosophy

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between neighborhood context factors and youth outcomes for youth in middle childhood in southeast Michigan, specifically in 6<sup>th</sup> grade. This study focused in on the notion that youth with high perceived neighborhood disorganization and feelings of threats to personal safety are more likely to have low self-control and exhibit delinquent activity. In addition, this study explored the extent to which community involvement, race, and gender moderate this relationship. This study utilizes secondary data from a larger Centers for Disease Control and Prevention-funded study on intimate partner violence, the SHARE study (“Strengthening Supports for Healthy Relationships: A Gender-Sensitive, Mixed Methods Analysis of Protective Factors for Intimate Partner Violence”). Findings indicate that there is an association between perceived neighborhood disorganization and perceived threats to personal safety and low self-control and delinquent activity. In addition, while

community involvement and gender do not appear to have a moderating role in this relationship, race does, specifically for White youth.

Neighborhood context is not the only predictor of youth outcomes. However, as this research indicates, it is important to know that delinquency and low self-control may be affected by neighborhood context factors that youth are exposed to during middle childhood. The period of middle childhood is where youth begin to make moral judgments and justifications for their behavior (whether negative or positive). It is also within this time period where prevention and intervention strategies may be most effective and should be focused. Additionally, findings suggest that developing healthy neighborhoods and reducing perceived neighborhood disorganization and threats to personal safety is a worthwhile goal.

### **AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT**

Takisha V. LaShore is a first generation college graduate. She completed her undergraduate studies at the University of Michigan- Ann Arbor, receiving Bachelor of Arts degrees in both Psychology and English Language and Literature. She went on to complete a Master of Social Work degree from University of Michigan- Ann Arbor, with a concentration in Interpersonal Practice with Children and Youth in Families and a minor concentration in Management of Human Services. She is a fully licensed Master-level Social Worker (Macro Specialty and Clinical Specialty).

Takisha is graduating with a PhD in Sociology from Wayne State University, with a specialization in Racial Inequality and a passion for Social Justice. Takisha is also currently a Lecturer with the Wayne State University School of Social Work and teaches Human Behavior Theory and Diversity courses. She also has administrative duties with the Office of Field Education overseeing Bachelor of Social Work student internships. Social justice has a huge influence on her teaching and interactions with students and professionals. Through her teaching and research Takisha seeks to center in on issues of social justice and introduce a framework for developing a social change orientation to combat discrimination, interconnected oppressions, and economic deprivation.